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ABSTRACT

This publication largely is based upon the testimony given at the hearing held by the Commission on Civil Rights in Cairo, Illinois, in March 1972. Half of the families in the Cairo area have poverty incomes, according to federal standards. Unemployment at 9 percent is nearly double the national average. About a third of the city--county population gets some kind of public assistance. More than one half of Cairo's dwellings are classified as deteriorating or dilapidated. How did Cairo get that way? Certainly uncontrollable economic developments contributed to the material decline. But disastrous race relations have blighted human resources essential to progress. Testimony before the Commission show that over the decades, blacks have comprised roughly 30 percent of the county and 40 percent of the city population. But no black had ever served on the county Housing Authority, the Cairo Public Utility Commission, Building Commission or Library Board. There were blacks in city cffice jobs. Admittedly, many American "people" are bored with race as a topic. But what color are these "people?" In Cairo, is their median family income 6400 dollars (white) or 2800 dollars (black)? Do they live in big-city ghettoes where jobs are always in short supply but drugs are plentiful? Do residents of Cairo's segregated public housing feel that the topic of racism has been exhausted? And the imposing body of civil rights law, how well does it work to change the quality of lives. These are some of the questions that brought the Commission to Cairo. (Author/JM)

CAIRO, ILLINOIS: RACISM AT FLOODTIDE

by Paul Good October 1973

J.S. Commission on Civil Rights Clearinghouse Publication No. 44

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U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is a temporary, independent, bipartisan Agency established by Congress in 1957 and directed to:

Investigate complaints alleging that citizens are being deprived of their right to vote by reason of their race, color, religion, sex or national origin, or by reason of fraudulent practices;

Study and collect information concerning legal developments constituting a denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution;

Appraise Federal laws and policies with respect to equal protection of the laws;

Serve as a national clearinghouse for information in respect to denials of equal protection of the laws; and

Submit reports, finding, and recommendations to the President and the Congress.

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PREFACE

This publication largely is based upon the testimony given at the hearing held by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in Cairo, Illinois, in March, 1972.

The report includes other material from historical sources, contemporary news accounts, the files of the Commission, and personal interviews conducted by the author. While all quoted material from the hearing transcript was produced under oath, quotations and other accounts from books and newspapers or from interviews are not part of the official record of the Commission.

This report was written by Paul Good, author and journalist, who has covered civil rights news for many years. The views of Mr. Good are not necessarily those of the Commission.

It has been said that Cairo is unique, and so it is, as every community is unique. But Cairo's problems are not unique—only their configuration. The report is published in the belief that opening windows and letting in light and fresh air may help the citizens, community leaders and public officials of Cairo, Illinois and of other "Cairos" move ahead on an agenda leading to a more democratic society, one more closely fulfilling the American promise.

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INTRODUCTION

This is about a small American city named Cairo that raises large American questions. The city occupies the southernmost tip of Illinois, thrusting a northern root deep into the South at a point where the nation's two greatest rivers and its two most turbulent streams of history merge. The Ohio and Mississippi Rivers meet not far from Cairo's main street which is more southerly than Richmond, Virginia, their waters bonding into one indivisible feature of the American landscape. But the merging streams of history are not so compatible. From the South of slavery, Cairo has inherited racial attitudes that are alien—in theory, at least—to the free State of Illinois that nurtured Abraham Lincoln.

These incompatible elements of racism and constitutional democracy for decades have created individual grief and social turmoil in the United States—and in this mid-century they produced the modern civil rights Movement. During the late 1960's and into the 1970's the Movement contended in the streets of Cairo with white forces seeking to maintain a racial status quo that blacks rejected. The violent drama that ensued seemed to follow a dog-eared script from an American morality play that by then had been witnessed in Birmingham in 1963, St. Augustine in 1964, Selma in 1965. . . .

But long after the evangelical Movement parade had gone by in most of the South, long after the drums were muffled and brave choruses of "We Shall Overcome" no longer echoed as people moved on to political consolidation of gains won by spirit, civil rights in Cairo remained inchoate. Blacks marched, boycotted and fought pitched battles with white vigilantes, and the city experienced a long night of shooting, burning and disorder unmatched in its duration anywhere else in the country. That night still has not ended. Newspaper headlines accumulating over the years sketch in short, bold strokes the outline of the Cairo story:

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"Guardsmen Patrol in Cairo, Ill. After 3 Nights of Violence"
N.Y. Times July 20, 1967

"Police Brutality . . Damned, Defended and Denied"
Metro East [Chicago] Journal June 3, 1968

"Fire Razes Cairo Firm That Employed Blacks"
Washington Post June 17, 1969

"Troopers Replace Cairo Vigilantes"
Washington Post June 19, 1969

"[Black] United Front Plans Expansion of Boycott"
Cairo Citizen June 26, 1969

"Cairo Mayor, Chief Resign; Latter Predicts Violence Soon"
UPI Sept. 16, 1969

"Gunfire Erupts at Negro Housing Project in Cairo"
N.Y. Times Sept. 17, 1969

"Cairo, Ill. at War With Itself"
Washington Post Sept 21, 1969

"Black Leaders Seized in Cairo"
Washington Star Oct. 5, 1969

"White Citizens Council Gains Strength in Cairo"
St. Louis Post Dispatch Dec. 10, 1969

"Cairo Police Dept. Being Studied"
Cairo Citizen Feb. 13, 1970

"Cairo Study Critical of Police"
Southern Illinoisan Dec. 2, 1970

"Federal Group Urges Task Force in Cairo"
Southern Illinoisan March 23, 1970

"Polaroid Funding United Front: FBI"
UPI June 13, 1971

"Shooting Starts Again in Cairo"
The Monitor August 3, 1972

Many of these stories from the extensive files of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights are long and detailed. It's interesting that the first story in the file is also the shortest of all. Dating from early 1967, before Cairo became synonymous nationwide with racial violence with a northern accent, and setting the stage for all that followed, it reads in its entirety:

"CAIRO, Ill., Feb. 28 (UPI)-Negroes making their most concerted drive in history at the polls in this capital of the Illinois cotton belt nominated three of eight candidates picked in the City Commissioner primary election Tuesday."

All the candidates were defeated after one was threatened with death. But was it accidental that black political assertion in 1967 signalled the beginning of Cairo's ordeal, after a century when no black held elective office there? Five years after that election, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights came to Cairo in March, 1972, to hold hearings that might answer that question and others. The Commission has conducted hearings all over the country for 15 years but it has rarely met under such tense circumstances. The police refuse to answer any preliminary questions and a dozen federal marshals carefully search everyone entering the hearing room in a federal courthouse from which a judge has barred radio and TV coverage. But unintimidated witnesses come to make their record and among the first to testify is the Rev. John I. Cobb, a black minister. He is asked whether he considers Detroit and Chicago—along with Cairo—to be "southern cities."

"I think," The Rev. Mr. Cobb replies, "That 'South' has moved all over the country."

If he is correct—and current northern reaction to school busing in Detroit, and to integrated suburban housing in Chicago, and to black student transfers to white neighborhood schools in New York do not contradict him—then Cairo is different from other northern cities in the degree of its white resistance to change, but not in the essence. And so a hearing that will document the inability—or reluctance—of state and federal governments to move civil rights law out of the books and into the lives of Cairo citizens may provide a small example of a broader, deeper governmental failure.

Certainly, no one who has been to Cairo would

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argue that it is typical of Illinois or any other area north of the Mason-Dixon line. On warm languid days the scent of blooming magnolia drifts over neighborhoods of small, wooden houses on pinched lots with here and there a refurbished steamboat Victorian mansion recalling a limited past glory, the 19th century days when Ulysses S. Grant slept in one of them. Some of the houses in the all-black public housing project called Pyramid Courts are bullet-pocked from 20th century violence; so is the front of the police station. The great levees buttressed with thick cement landing aprons are more stark than picturesque, and few of the barges towed in placid file up and down the Ohio and Mississippi turn in from their channels to unload their cargo as they did in the past. Despite the fact that these great rivers of commerce flow alongside, the city is an economic backwater. Dozens of juke joint bars flourish a block from the Ohio, their neon signs brightening Commercial Street for a few gaudy hours each night. But other dozens of small businesses are boarded-up, their windows staring blankeyed at cavernous warehouses once crammed with river cargo and now padlocked and empty.

A sign on a cafe wall says: "Cairo—Love It or Leave it." In the last 50 years, black and white residents—the vast majority young—have been doing just that. Cairo and Alexander County have lost *half their population in just two decades*. Most of those who remain behind exist in the kind of deadening poverty that may not produce hunger but starves ambition, saps hope. Cairo "leads" all comparably-sized Illinois cities in the number of families living below accepted subsistence levels; half the area families have poverty incomes, according to federal standards. Unemployment at 9 percent is nearly double the national average with black joblesness two and one half times the white. About a third of the city-county population gets some kind of public assistance—2200 out of 6000 persons unable to make it without help. More than half of Cairo's dwellings are classified as deteriorating or dilapidated, placing Cairo second in this unenviable Illinois category.

Perhaps the single set of statistics that tells most about Cairo's economic fatigue and the flight of still vigorous residents to escape is this one: in the last six years 350 dilapidated housing units have been torn down, but in the last ten years only 11 private homes have been built. The newest, handsomest building in town is Riverview Apartments, six modern stories faced with pretty red, green and yellow tiles rising over the Ohio levee. It was built with federal money to house the indigent aged who sit on airy balconies, watching the flow of their own diminishing river of time.

What Happened to Cairo's Promise?

How did Cairo get that way? Why should a community be dying on its feet in a spot so geographically favored that once it was believed the city would rival Chicago? These are questions that no single, simple answer can satisfy. Certain uncontrollable economic developments conspired in the material decline. But beyond them one senses a poverty of the spirit with the recurrent element of disastrous race relations shadowing past and present, blighting human resources essential to progress.

Robert Landsden, a 62-year-old white attorney and banker whose grandfather wrote Cairo's official history and has a park named in his honor, says: "There are a lot of white people who would sooner see Cairo float down the Mississippi than give a black man a break."

Testimony before the Commission on Civil Rights will add dimension to this assertion. It will develop that over the decades, blacks have comprised roughly 30 percent of the county and 40 percent of the city population, percentages that remain remarkably consistent. But as of the Commission's appearance in March, 1972, no black had ever served on the county Housing Authority. No black had ever served on the Cairo Public Utility Commission. Nor on the Building Commission or Library Board. There were no blacks in city office jobs although 13 of 14 garbage workers were black. The fourteenth was a white supervisor. There had been one black fireman in Cairo's history, named during demonstrations, and one black City Councilman sworn in during the same period. No black ever sat on the County Welfare

Commission but if the Commission was off-limits to nonwhites, easy access to poverty was never denied. With median county income for white families at $6400 and $2800 for blacks, it followed that the number of blacks receiving public assistance was double the number of whites.

Statistics tell *a* story but never *the* story. Individuals like Anthony Patterson who has lived all his 19 years in Cairo does not have to add up all the numbers to know how they affected his past and circumscribed his future. He was eight when Cairo's only swimming pool closed rather than integrate; through quiet hot summers, he watched weeds grow until they choked the pool. Patterson grew up in segregated public housing and when schools were forced to integrate, he watched former white classmates ride on public school buses to an all-white private school. He says: "This town is so far behind and backwards, it's really a shame. You don't think about staying and looking for a job. You can't even work as a bagboy in a supermarket. You just think about going away all the time."

But white attorney John Holland, a contemporary of attorney Landsden, does not feel that black youth like Patterson are victimized by race.

In his professional capacity, he represents the dominant white majority in numerous civil rights cases and he offers this insight into solutions for the discontent of blacks like young Patterson.

"Build a lot of athletic facilities," he tells me. "Stick up 15 basketball posts and bring in first-class men to teach 'em."

Mr. Holland ridicules the notion that historic white dominance and black inability to exert proportionate political and economic authority have exacted an inevitable toll on the community. Others, however, feel that divided community spirit that can close a swimming pool can also close a factory when ensuing racial confrontations make headlines and fear of violence moves in to stay. Then, a kind of municipal fatalism sets in, a fatalism like a man watching flood waters lap over a levee but too stunned or stubborn to save himself by taking action. When the hearings have detailed all the woes a divided Cairo faces, the present mayor, Joseph Walder, is asked whether the city can continue on the way it has been.

"Well, yes, I guess we can," the mayor testifies, "We have continued this long."

And later, when the hearings have ended, Cairo newspaper editor David Cain challenges the good faith of the Commission in holding the hearings after the worst of violence had died down and the city was "calm." Mr. Cain, a serious man in his 30's who employs some black office workers on the staff of his *Cairo Citizen,* says when interviewed:

"I don't think the Civil Rights Commission wanted to listen to anything good. It doesn't understand how a community like this functions. We have an aggressive Chamber of Commerce that was doing real well until the hearings flared things up again. I think the Commission just wanted to castigate us."

Mr. Cain, who comes from Baltimore, reflects a prevailing white sentiment—in Cairo and other places. Why do agencies like the United States Commission on Civil Rights roil up apparently calm waters, reviving and agitating through its inquiry issues no longer contended in the streets? Enough civil rights law has already been passed to paper the Supreme Court chambers and aren't people tired to death of racial debate? There is a certain logic to this complaint so long as certain assumptions are not questioned closely. Does quiet in the street mean that racial injustices have been eliminated, or that movements, like the men and women in them, have flagged in energy or have moved on to other less spectacular activities? To put it another way, is it possible to convince some whites that hard racial problems exist only by taking to the streets?

Admittedly, many American "people" are bored with race as a television and newspaper topic. They would prefer ecology, unisex or whatever particular concern is currently "in." But what color are these "people?" In Cairo, is their median family income $6400 (white) or $2800 (black)? Do they live in big-city ghettos where jobs are always in short supply but drugs are plentiful? Do residents of Cairo's segregated public housing feel that the topic of racism has been exhausted, that all is really both said and done?

And this imposing body of law, how well does it work to change the quality of lives? After decades of political rhetoric and legislation, why can't a government capable of the effort required to land men on the moon effectively end racism and poverty in one small midwestern city?

Does it really want to?

These are some of the questions that brought the Commission on Civil Rights to Cairo. The answers have implications for all America. Both questions and answers will first be placed in some historic context before the hearings are explored in these pages. And much of the history—even allowing for Cairo's idiosyncracies—will re-tell an oft-told American racial story. But there is no understanding the present without the past, and if Cairo's present is troubled, its past has been little short of disastrous.

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HISTORY

I Prelude to Confrontation

"The tongue of land ..... which separates the two rivers, was, like the whole of the country covered with rich woods which were partly cleared, and a few houses erected, with an inn and store, and the dwelling of a planter, where we took in wood. In this store we saw, among heaps of skins, that of a black bear, lately killed ....."

Prince Alexander Phillip Maximilian of Austria, 1832

"Welcome to Cairo, deep in the southland where magnolia vies with the mimosa ..... (in Thebes) you will see sitting serenely the third Courthouse of Alexander County ..... Made of native sandstone, with four tall front pillars, its dungeon cell once imprisoned Dred Scott, in his search for freedom."

Present-day pamphlet of the Cairo Chamber of Congress

History has not been kind to Cairo. Its chronicle is one of great expectations unfulfilled, of adversity dogging generations until the flanking Ohio and Mississippi Rivers no longer seemed routes to prosperity but more like the closing jaws of a vise squeezing civic enterprise out of the community. Perhaps because the rivers always promised so much there was a correspondent lack of creative output in the history of the people living between them.

No one, of course, should hold people today responsible for their history and it is fruitless to speculate on what Cairo would be in 1973 if historical circumstance were altered. If river-borne prosperity *had* taken the meanness out of existence over the years, would a more open-handed, open-hearted society have developed there? If no African slaves had ever been hauled to the southern United States and then made their way to Cairo as "free Negroes," would the prevailing white character—for better or worse—be different?

That kind of speculation is less significant than examining how people deal with their history as it is,

what they choose to find meaningful in it and to perpetuate, and what they reject as unworthy for themselves. For example, the days when cotton—if not king—was at least a northern prince in Alexander County, are long gone. Where 4000 and more acres used to be harvested, the acreage now is 500 and declining. But today's postcards greeting visitors at motel desks feature scenes of cotton fields with blacks bent low, trailing gunny sacks, dark fingers reaching for white bolls. The postcards, offensive to 40 percent of Cairo's citizens in their recollection of black exploitation, are an anachronism. Yet consciously or subconsciously, they present a self-image with which the white Cairo majority is comfortable. But postcards and other surface impressions at best are only footnotes to history. If the experience of the Commission in its 1972 hearings is to provide a true measure of today's racial problems in Cairo and tomorrow's possibilities, that experience must be scaled against the deep, broad background of the near and distant past.

Early Cairo

The first dwellings built in the Cairo wilderness of the early 19th century were constructed by Missouri plantation slaves ferried across the Mississippi by their white owner. The sweat of slavery, the taint from men paying lip service to freedom while holding other men as chattel was early in the soil. And in the air by 1838 was the boosterism of fast-buck land speculators who reported to potential British and American investors:

"There is not in any quarter of the globe a situation so commanding and replete with every kind of produce and material to promote the prosperity of the merchant, the skill of the mechanic, and the growth of a great city."

Four years later, Cairo's land boom had burst, bankrupting investors in New York and London. Charles Dickens floated by on the Mississippi in 1842 and observed in his "American Notes:"

"At the junction of the two rivers, on ground so flat and low and marshy, that at certain seasons of the year it is inundated to the house-tops, lies a breeding place of fever, ague and death; vaunted in England as a mine of Golden Hope, and speculated in, on the faith of monstrous representations to many people's ruin. A dismal swamp, on which the half-built houses rot away; cleared here and there for the space of a few yards; and teeming, then, with rank and unwholesome vegetation in whose baleful shade the wretched wanderers who are tempted hither droop and die and lay their bones; the hateful Mississippi circling and eddying before it, and turning off upon its southern course, a slimy monster hideous to behold; a hotbed of disease, an ugly sepulchure, a grave uncheered by any gleam of promise; a place without one single quality, in each or air or water, to commend it: such is this dismal Cairo."

Dickens may have been excessive but from the beginning, the portents were bad. The British involvement in the boom-and-bust apparently was responsible for the area's Alexandrian nomenclature which persists today. The southern tip of Illinois is nicknamed "Little Egypt." There is Thebes in Alexander County where Dred Scott unsuccessfully sought freedom. Interestingly, the all-black public housing project—Pyramid Courts—derives its name from the Afro-Egyptian "heritage." But the all-white project bears the All-American name Elmwood Courts.

Cairo began a comeback during the Civil War when it was a Union staging area for the midwestern armies of General U.S. Grant. Merchants prospered on war trade and the Sisters of the Holy Cross founded St. Mary's Hospital to care for wounded soldiers, the hospital enduring to this day. After the war, Cairo seemed about to fulfill its promise as a great rivertrade center. When the upper Mississippi and Ohio froze in winter, wood-hulled barges could not penetrate the ice, but Cairo, ice-free, prospered as the trans-shipment link between river and railroad carriers. It became a city of warehouses, great barns of commerce busy with the movement of bales of produce in and out.

Later Developments

There is not space in this report to detail all that

subsequently occurred. But the time came when the development of steel-hulled barges that could cut through ice allowed Cairo to be bypassed; always there was a new bar on which to founder around each bend of time. Technology built a multimillion dollar levee system that kept floodwaters out and encouraged railroads to come in, making Cairo a bustling rail hub. Then, that same technology laid down superhighways that diffused transport and minimized the importance of Cairo's geographical location. The city existed on transit but over the years the only dependable traveller was the Canadian goose faithfully wintering there as it does today.,

While economic fortunes ebbed and flowed, Cairo stuck fast racially. Like Missouri just across the Mississippi and Kentucky just across the Ohio, it adopted many Deep South laws and mores to create a separate but unequal society for blacks. In this intent, of course, it was not unique among northern cities. The southern Post-Reconstruction period that produced Jim Crow and lynch laws had its counterpart in the North . . . less savage, more hypocritical and ultimately designed, as Post-Reconstruction was, to assure a race neither slave nor free.

Both versions mingled in Cairo. Blacks could vote. But to insure white political control where a potential 40 percent of the vote was black, Cairo would by law run all candidates at large. This prevented (and still prevents) a black candidate for city council from running from a black district which might give him a majority. The city's numerically superior white vote could always win in an at-large election. Political control and economic control worked in tandem. Without legal access to the chambers where economic decisions were made, and lacking alternate forms of organized pressure, blacks took what they were given. And by the mid 1900's, there was not very much to give.

End of a Dream

It is said by some veteran observers, white and black, that the Cairo power structure (the phrase may be too grand for the ramshackle edifice it describes) discerned in this century that the city was never going to make it big. Many of the vast warehouses along the Ohio levee once burgeoning with goods in transit among river, road or rail lay empty, padlocked. The bulk of industry coming in was runaway, lured by the promise of cheap, tractable, non-union labor that included unskilled and impoverished men off broken-down farms on the far side of both rivers. A desperate competition among whites for jobs guaranteed their continuing solidarity against blacks who, in turn, could be had for next-to-nothing to do whatever dirty or menial work whites disdained. Black men with paralyzed earning power meant black women on the market as full-time domestics at $20 or $25 for a week's work and this meant that white families with modest incomes could enjoy the racial fringe benefit of cooks, laundresses, nursemaids and scrub-ups. All these elements, according to observers like former Cairo newspaper publisher Martin Brown, persuaded white men of authority to run the city as a limited fief, resisting change that might challenge their entrenched position, reaping the fruits of stagnation.

Brown told a *Washington Post* interviewer that a caste system existed which was "probably worse than the racial problem. You are born into your station of life here and can't rise except by marriage, but you can fall lower. This is the system that has maintained the establishment and driven away many of the young people, the potential leaders of the community.

"And," he continued, "We didn't get this way overnight. The state has treated us like an orphan child riding in the rumble seat of a car during a snowstorm." *

Lieutenant Governor Paul Simon would later add official weight to publisher Brown's observations in a report on Cairo that said in part:

> "Decades of state indifference have not only existed for the economic problems but for racial, educational and other problems also. But those far from the scene, who over the years have shared responsibility for what has happened, do not have to live with the tensions which smother this com-

*For stating such opinions publicly, Brown had the windows of his newspaper demolished and advertisers stopped advertising. He sold out and left Cairo.

munity."

By this mid-century, it looked as if the status quo might last forever. Outsiders reading the Texaco Touring Atlas by Rand McNally to plan a drive through southern Illinois were not apprised of gathering tensions. They learned instead that ". . . riverside streets have a steamboat atmosphere. On side streets at night, Negro jug bands still play." And in the city, black and white played at an historic charade described by Hattie Kendrick, a leader of the Cairo NAACP: "Too long have the two races stood grinning in each other's faces, while they carry the fires of resentment and hate in their hearts, and with their hands hid behind their backs they carry the unsheathed sword."

Starting in the '60s

The grins had frozen by the early 1960's. They would soon disappear for good. There were small, sporadic boycotts by blacks trying to force desegregation of public accomodations, and answering violence from whites. In 1962, the city's only swimming pool, which had been operated by the Rotary Club, integrated for two weeks after blacks complained to state officials, then closed for good. From that day until now, the young people of Cairo during the scorching southern Illinois summers have had to drive 30 miles to swim in a pool or risk the Mississippi currents where some have died.

The Rotary Club was all-white and still is. So were Kiwanis, the VFW, the Knights of Columbus and so they are today. Fred Wood, a witness at the 1972 hearing, tells some stories. "One time I went to the Elks Club. I was just joking. And I went to the Elks Club to try to join and I was talking to a friend of mine. He was a white friend. And I asked him how about joining the club? He said, 'No, no, it's for white only.' They call me Crawdad [and] he said, 'You know one thing, Crawdad. They even got on their license Caucasian only.' I never seen this but I mean that's what they said they got on their license."

Children learned the score from adults early. There was a white Boy Scout troop but no black one learning how to "Be Prepared." The color line had long been broken in pro ball but not in Cairo.

"We once had a Little League team [that] was all black," Wood relates. "And they had a white Little League team. We used to try to play them but they never would play us . . . When I [would] go to approach them about playing them, their schedule was always made up. So one time—next year I tried to fool them. I approached them early in August but they told me they had got together in March. So then I asked them next year about merging the teams. And they said, 'Okay, we'll do this.' "

"So we had a meeting . . , [then] I received a letter from the Egyptian League which is the white league, [which] said, 'In order to merge we'd have to have $600, 50 percent white, 50 percent black players, and umpires and managers will have to be of reputable character'—whatever that mean. [But] if I get a hundred black and they didn't get but 25 whites, then I got 75 black kids that were not doing anything. So they wanted 50 percent black, 50 percent white, $600 to merge. I mean this wasn't a request. This was a demand . . . and I couldn't meet their demand."

At the roller skating rink, there was no bargaining. When blacks in 1964 picketed to gain admission, vigilantes were waiting with clubs and chains. Among those beaten was a 16-year-old named Charles Koen who was destined to become a minister and leader among the blacks, and a living symbol to whites of criminal anarchy seeking to destroy the old order.

Illinois State Advisory Committee

In June, 1966, the Illinois State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held an open meeting in Cairo. The 489 pages of transcript for the first time opened a window on the city and county to the world outside. Again, this limited report cannot review what was said in all its illuminating detail. But the words of some participants draw such an indelible civic portrait that they must be set down. Words of other participants—when ranged against the Commission's 1972 hearing—will provide perspective on how the Federal government has discharged its obligation to enforce civil rights law in one small American city.

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The Reverend M.F. Traylor spoke at the 1966 meeting, a black minister so well regarded that white ministers occasionally hold services in his AME Ward Chapel—although they respectfully decline to invite him to worship with their all-white congregations. His black man's view of things coincides remarkably with that of white man Brown:

"In the city of Cairo," says Rev. Traylor, "We keep industry out, we limit ourselves to little because we are afraid the other fellow will get something and he will eventually be bigger than we are and we shall ultimately serve him. We don't want to serve all together collectively."

"You ask the question why have they [blacks] not used the facilities of the Fair Employment Practices Commission?* Why, they are afraid. Why have they not spoken out? These people are afraid to speak out . . . There are a few folk here in the city can order some of my members to throw stones at my windows and break them out, throw stones at me. It has existed for many years and has become an obsession. It is part of their thinking that they have to bow and cringe to the powers that be."

"I don't know who the brain trustees are but there are people here that the police are afraid of, the mayor is afraid, the teachers are afraid, and our whole system has someone that wields [such] a strong arm of influence over them that they are afraid to do anything in defense of what they think is right."

Rev. Traylor then speaks words that within a year would prove prophetic: "We cannot build Cairo up until the image is changed, until we are all for one and one for all, until we see that we have to live together and forget a man's color. We are going to have unemployment, we are going to have riots, we are going to have trouble here in Cairo."

Other witnesses describe endemic job discrimination by private and governmental employers. In 1966, only seven years ago, two blacks were employed in all of Cairo's retail and banking establishments; the U.S. Post Office had no black regular carriers; three plants with federal contracts employed no black office help. When jobless blacks went on welfare, they were forced to pick cotton in season at substandard wages or lose their welfare rights.* Since local plants—including government contractors—would not hire black seamstresses, one welfare mother with five children had to travel 50 miles a day to work, arising at 3 a.m. to feed and dress the children before carrying them to a sitter. When eventually she could find no one to mind them, she lost their welfare allotments.

It is placed on record that, despite all the integration laws affecting federally-subsidized housing, Cairo's Pyramid Courts remained all black, Elmwood Place all white. It had been that way since 1939. Mrs. Gesta de Berry, mother of two children, tells of unsuccessful efforts by her and her husband to get into Pyramid Courts. After months of frustration, Mrs. de Berry says, she told officials she was going to apply for all-white Elmwood. Within four days, the de Berrys had a place in Pyramid Courts. James S. Johnson, Executive Director of the Alexander County Housing Authority, is asked at the open meeting whether he is working on a desegregation plan. He replies on June 11, 1966: "I am not working on that plan but I shall be happy to take it up with my Board at the next meeting."

Federally-funded anti-poverty programs are discovered to be among the worst discriminators. Probing the private sector, the hearing asks Robert Layton, Executive Director of the Cairo Chamber of Commerce, whether the lack of jobs for blacks sounded like a problem. He replies:

"Yes it does . . . and I think with proper meetings held with the business people and the leaders of the Negro population, I am sure that these problems can be resolved."

(But Mr. Layton, however optimistic, does not call the shots on the Chamber of Commerce. Later,

*Illinois was one of the last northern industrial states to adopt an FEPC.

*"There is evidence of collusion between . . large farmers, the public aid department and the Illinois State Employment Service to keep the Negroes in a form of slavery by paying them slave wages. When workers return to welfare rolls after the cotton-picking season, they are put on general assistance which pays less than regular welfare payments." Advisory Comm. member William H. Robinson, E. St. Louis M. E. **Journal**, July 20, 1967.

after Cairo's troubles have begun in earnest and no black jobs have developed, a *Washington Post* reporter, curious about black participation in the community, seeks out Chamber President Harry Bolen, a retired army general. The reporter asks whether blacks, representing 40 percent of the population, deserve more voice in Cairo government. Mr. Bolen replies: "Sh—.")

The effect of the Cairo atmosphere on black youth might be imagined but those who spoke at the open meeting spell it out. In 1966, de facto segregation persisted in the schools although legal pressure had forced officials to loosen up.* A sprinkling of blacks from Cairo's segregated Sumner High School had entered Cairo High School. One quick result was that the annual senior class trip inevitably (pointedly) taken in the Deep South and much enjoyed by white students was ended.

But beyond such acts of minor meanness, witnesses tell of Federal Title I remedial programs—sorely needed in a place where the median number of school years completed by all males was 9, for all females 9.4; by black males 6.7 and black females 7.9—unfairly administered to blacks. John Joiner, a Sumner guidance counselor, told how his low-income students anticipated Neighborhood Youth Corps summer jobs. But the school board rejected the federal program in 1966 because it would be "an invasion of privacy" for applicants to reveal family income under the law. Blacks, it goes without saying, were not consulted on their "invasion" preferences.

Mr. Joiner adds that in counseling some 800 black students . . . ". . . I have never heard a single student express an interest in living in Cairo when they became adults . . . in fact, the Negro youngsters have expressed a positive desire to graduate and leave Cairo as soon as possible".

Then Mr. Joiner lays out the statistics of exodus:

Class of 1960—one graduate still in town out of 26
Class of 1961—one out of 34
Class of 1962—two out of 33
Class of 1963—six out of 35
Class of 1964—two out of 37
Class of 1965—nine out of 55

After the State Advisory Committee meeting an unpublished report by the State Advisory Committee catalogues the many failures of federal programs to remedy abuses of civil rights law. The report concludes with a summation that will invite comparison with findings of the Commission hearing six years later:

" ..... not one federal official who appeared at the meeting indicated that his office had working knowledge of the problems mentioned in this report. Not one official testified that his office had visited the area since the passage of the applicable civil rights legislation to review the situation . ... When informed of the abuses, federal officials although shocked, defended their ignorance ..... Generally, they seemed to feel that pro-forma compliance activities, when thwarted by circumstantial, programmatic or business necessity, were sufficient to meet their obligations under civil rights law. Thus, they joined hands in the vicious circle."

Mrs. Rosie Bryant, an 84-year-old welfare recipient so poor that she and her husband had to mortgage their mule, has a more down-to-earth summation of things. When asked at the 1966 meeting what civil rights law had done for her. "Listen," she says, "I don't see a bit of difference now than I did way back in '51 and '52 in the civil rights. It hasn't reached us. I reckon it's on its way, but it ain't got here yet."

*Loosening up classroom mix, however, left white control tight as ever. In 1966, when the all black Booker T. Washington elementary school was integrated, the name was changed. Instead of memorializing the famed Negro leader, the school was renamed for a former white teacher, Francis Bennett.

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HISTORY

II The Battle Joined

"We, the people of the United Front, have taken a giant step toward rebuilding a community that has been dying under the white administration. The dying has taken place because of their systematic neglect of not only the Black community but the white community as well. It isn't necessary to reiterate that life here in Cairo is in fact volatile; but what is necessary is that such a state not be allowed to prevail in human depravation."

United Front Statement of Purpose—1970

"We were having no trouble—and no occasion for trouble. Our people were happy until the militants came along. They did it in Detroit. They did it in Washington. It's all part of the same picture. It's all a part of the same conspiracy ..... We've got so-called hot-headed white people, too. (But) we can keep 'em in line."

General Harry Bolen, former Chamber of Commerce President—1970

During the night of July 15th, 1967, a 19-year-old AWOL black soldier named Robert L. Hunt, Jr. died in his cell at the Cairo police station. Police said he had hanged himself with his T-shirt but many blacks were suspicious and charged police brutality. The body was whisked off for embalming before dawn, there was no autopsy, and to this day the death is shrouded in controversy.* However he died, Private Hunt's tragedy marked the beginning of sustained public violence that was to put the city on the map in a way the Chamber of Commerce never envisioned. There were three days of black protest

*Hunt had been arrested while riding with 5 others in a car stopped by police for a defective taillight. Police said Hunt had become verbally abusive and they charged him with disorderly conduct. An inquest held 2 months later ruled the death a suicide. Immediately after the inquest a coroner together with the 2 policemen who allegedly discovered Hunt's hanging body, resigned.

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and white retaliation, white homes and shops burned, black protestors beaten and arrested. The National Guard was sent in to maintain order by state officials who previously had permitted Cairo to founder in racial and economic disorder. Reforms were quickly promised and just as quickly forgotten.

This account cannot describe all the violent episodes or all the charges and counter-charges that would follow in the months and years to come. Details are obscured by the smoke of battle, smudged by the distance in time. People contradict each other, and the line separating truth, partisan distortion and outright lying is not always clear. Racism, at heart, seems a simple emotion based on fear and rejection of what is different. But if the emotion is simple, the complexities associated with it are not. Beyond cries of "nigger" and "honky" in Cairo, lay lifetimes of economic, political and social relationships largely but not exclusively determined by the fact of race. A book is required to sort them all out, maybe even a shelf of books to grasp the total reality of this one small American city. These pages can only try to sketch the significant developments and revealing statements that mark the course of events, and to trace the role of governmental agencies that preceded the 1972 arrival of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in Cairo.

In the Wake of Disorder

In the immediate wake of disorder, 67-year-old Mayor Lee P. Stenzel cautioned fellow-whites who were threatening to revert to the "old way" of keeping blacks in line. He said he had been present at the bloody East St. Louis riots in 1917. "I saw the slaughter and destruction," the mayor said. "East St. Louis hasn't amounted to a damned thing since. If it happens here like it happened there, we won't have industry here for 25 years."

But Preston Ewing, a young TV repairman and president of the Cairo NAACP chapter, stressed a different note. Charging rampant police misbehavior, he told the mayor: "Your most important problem is not industry; it's race. I'm telling you, if you don't solve the racial problem you aren't ever going to get industry here."

There were two reactions to Ewing's view of Cairo reality. A 7-point agreement was reached by black leaders like Ewing and the Reverend Charles Koen, Mayor Stenzel and State officials.* It promised an overhaul of the Cairo Police Department that included hiring of more black patrolmen, and application to the Justice Department for a grant to begin a program of police-community relations. The all-white Fire Department was to get its first black and efforts to provide more city and retail jobs were promised.

The other reaction was the formation of an armed all-white group called the Committee for Ten Million but soon dubbed the White Hats in recognition of the headgear it adopted along with other para-military trappings.** Its chief was a wealthy lawyer named Peyton Berbling, one of the most powerful men in Alexander County who had been and was destined to become again the county's state attorney. He told reporters that the White Hats were armed with "whatever weapons they have—shotgun, rifles, pistols" and boasted that within ten minutes they could "stop everything that moves in Cairo. If they can't move, they can't firebomb." A so-called truth squad of General Bolen's Chamber of Commerce was later to describe its formation this way:

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*Mayor Stenzel paid quickly for advocating even limited racial reforms. Whites turned on him and he resigned. His resignation statement, delivered as he wept openly, said in part: "I've lived in this town 47 years and everything I own is tied up here. When people you've known all these years and whom you believe are your friends turn against you, curse you and turn their backs, it's just not worth it."

**Blacks charged that the white hats, along with other equipment came from the stores of the Cairo civil defense organization which has no black members. The NAACP's Ewing protested this alleged discrimination to Illinois Civil Defense Director Val Oshel whose office receives federal funding. On June 26, 1970, Mr. Oshel wrote Ewing that the Cairo unit did not receive any federal funds or equipment. "Civil Defense," he wrote, "in the final analysis is the normal government of the community or county planning for action and then acting during a disaster or a nuclear attack. So long as the city government of Cairo prepares for these contingencies without requesting federal funds or equipment, this Agency has no means of control of either the organization, its activities, or its equipment."

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"In July of 1967, a number of fire-bombings occurred in our city ..... Following this outburst of violence, neighborhood men ..... formed themselves into watchmen in the event more fire-bombings resulted. The group adopted President Eisenhower's article entitled the COMMITTEE OF TEN MILLION in the Reader's Digest, (August, 1967) as the rule for and the pattern of this organization. Its purpose is protective, not punitive; nor is it racist, inasmuch as Negroes were invited to join."

None did. But every white man in the area who was anybody and many who were not—some 600 in all—enlisted. Among them were a dapper, youthful Baptist minister named Larry Potts, a well-to-do warehouse owner named Tom Madra, and businessmen Allen E. Moss and Jimmy Dale, all of whom would subsequently play interesting roles in the Cairo story.

The White Hats claimed credit for the abatement of widespread violence in 1968. It was, at any rate, a year of surface quiet when blacks watched to see whether white promises would be redeemed. Portents were not good. On July 30, the Reverend Larry Potts used a baseball bat to beat to death a 73-year-old black man he said was attempting to rape his wife. A coroner's jury absolved him of any guilt and Potts continued his efforts to organize a private elementary and high school to be called Camelot. Cairo schools a year before had been forced to integrate under HEW pressure. But federal desegregation law was powerless to break the color line in Cairo's Little League. Sooner than integrate the teams in the city's ballpark, the League was disbanded. Like the swimming pool abandoned in 1962, the diamond soon was reclaimed by weeds and areas where black and white might mingle were further diminished.

A few black patrolmen were added to the Police Department and a Neighborhood Youth Corps program took some of the edge off youthful black unemployment. But a $75,000 police-community relations grant in late 1969 went unused. And civic offices remained virtually all-white while blacks complained that local merchants accepting their dollars would not even open up jobs like bag boy in the local supermarket. Clearly, there were not enough jobs in Cairo for everybody. Just as clear was the white determination that old priorities would not change, that if *anybody* were hired he would not be black. Aggravating the economic rasp on the black community was the presence of the White Hats on semi-official patrol. When their leader, Peyton Berbling, again became county attorney, the distinction between vigilantism and officialdom—if it ever had existed—seemed to vanish.

Primed for Fresh Violence

By 1969, old grievances and new tensions had primed Cairo for fresh violence. When it came, many whites blamed a newly-arrived white Catholic priest named Father Gerald Montroy. On March 23, 1969, he was quoted in a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* story which began:

"Police dogs, shotguns and an armed vigilante group known as the 'White Hats' are being used to keep the black people of Cairo, Ill. 'in line,' Father Gerald Montroy charged yesterday .....

" 'White people in some communities fear the blacks, but in Cairo the opposite is true,' Father Montroy said. '..... the blacks in Cairo are afraid of the whites and are terribly oppressed by them. Cairo is a keg of racial dynamite.' "

The Chamber of Commerce—which had little or no luck in improving Cairo's economic picture but enjoyed considerable success in rallying white support around racial issues—called Father Montroy an "irreverent and irresponsible priest." It deplored his "vicious and slanderous" attack on Cairo's image. A fellow Catholic priest in Cairo, Father Hugh Kilfoil, a conservative pastor of St. Patrick's Church, joined in the criticism of Father Montroy, calling the White Hats "a good thing."

"Its purpose is to protect property," he said. "We can't have militants throwing bombs . . . We're making real progress in race relations in Cairo. The schools are integrated, the hospital is integrated. There is no place in the city that is not integrated. When you change from segregation to integration you are going to have some growing pains."

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The Chamber of Commerce blamed Father Montroy for fomenting an upheaval that began on March 31st when a 2½ hour gun battle ensued around Pyramid Courts. Earlier that same day, shots had been fired into a car used by the black leader, Reverend Koen.

Intermittently over the next three years, Cairo would hear gunfire, live with fear. Two of its mayors would resign, four police chiefs would either resign or be fired (one discovered to be possessed of a felony record), and hundreds of citizens—the vast majority black—would be jailed as an outgrowth of demonstrations. During the next 11 months alone, there would be at least 80 separate shooting incidents, most centered around the all-black Pyramid Courts where some residents took to sleeping in bathtubs at night to escape fusillades that pierced walls and windows. There was not a single arrest made by the Police Department in these shootings nor, for that matter, in a pitched battle where the Police Headquarters itself came under fire, the facade bullet-chipped to this day.* Many of the arrests resulted from an anti-picketing ordinance passed by the City Council and later ruled unconstitutional.

Could the actions of one Catholic priest (who even some civil rights advocates conceded might have made judgmental errors out of naivete and dismay at racial conditions he found incompatible with the prevailing Christian ethic) account for all this civic chaos? It could if one subscribed to the theory —some would call it myth—of the "outside agitator" who roils calm waters and sets race against race where before they had coexisted in harmony. But the theory requires that history be dismissed or rewritten, and present racial relationships denied.

*For all the violence, there were remarkably few fatalities. A former black policeman told me that, in the beginning at least, blacks and whites who knew each other deliberately aimed high. A white man named Trapley struck by a brick during an interracial brawl died. In April, 1969, a black man, Floyd Parker, 56, was found dead after Pyramid Courts came under fire. On Nov. 18, 1970, a black soldier home on leave was wounded by shots fired from ambush as he walked with his clergyman from the First Missionary Church . . . Wiley Anderson, 21, died later from four bullet wounds.

The United Front of Cairo was formed by blacks, mostly Protestant, as the tempo of conflict quickened. On April 3, 1969, the White Hats offered their entire 600 member force as volunteer deputies to the city and county. Already, scores of individual members of the White Hats had been deputized—some expert estimates range as high as 450—and blacks charged they roamed freely, armed and agressive, intimidating the black community.

"I could get my dog deputized in this town," said white businessman Philip D. Marsden, a deputy himself.*

A Show of State Muscle

A Commission on Civil Rights attorney, was sent to Cairo in May, 1969, and learned that deputizing of the White Hats was imminent. On June 17, the Commission's warning was sent to Governor Oglivie by the Illinois State Advisory Committee. One week later, under the threat of an injunction from State Attorney General William J. Scott, the White Hats were officially disbanded and the promiscuous deputizing of whites brought under control.** Apart from calling in the National Guard, it was the first show of state muscle in the Cairo crises and it raised the

*Deputy status did not save for Marsden his business, Cairo Wood Products, Inc. "A wood products firm that hired many hard-core unemployed, some considered militants, from Cairo's Negro population was destroyed by fire tonight . . ." Washington Post, 6/16/69.

**The White Hats were promptly superseded by the United Citizens for Community Action, a group that affiliated with the white Citizens Council in the Deep South. On Nov. 5, 1969, UCCA officials went to Jackson, Mississippi to confer with Citizens' Council leaders. The next month, UCCA formally joined the Jackson group, in a move that the Citizens Council said added 2,000 members. Council field director Gordon Baum told the St. Louis Post Dispatch on Dec. 10, 1969: "The white people of Cairo learned they could not sit down at a table and work out differences because the black side had a stacked deck, which was that if they didn't get what they wanted they could bring out side pressure because the UCCA was a lonely local group." Among UCCA officials were Rev. Potts and Capt. Jerry Lebo, commander of the Illinois National Guard unit in Cairo.

question . . . what had outside authority, in Springfield and Washington, been doing while conditions deteriorated?

It is perhaps significant that one week after the United Front on April 7, 1969, began a downtown boycott that immediately hurt white business, Illinois Lt. Gov. Paul Simon made an investigatory visit to Cairo. His recommendations, made in a report a few weeks later, were couched in the cautious style of a politician juggling a racial hot potato.

"Not surprisingly," it said at the outset, "Cairo has many evidences of southern culture, most of them community assets. But the racial attitudes of the Old South have also been part of the Cairo tradition. As in the South, there is a growing awareness of the dangers and inadequacies of such attitudes, but as in the South, the changes in attitude will not come overnight. But many of those who would today be in the 25–34 age group who could be the leaders in changing community attitudes have left. Fortunately, there is still much enlightened leadership around which the community can rally."

Later, the report observed: "The White Hats or Committee of Ten Million have become a source of fear for the black community. This fear appears to be largely unwarranted. This is not to suggest that there are not extremists within the organization. Cairo has its share of extremists, black and white . . ."

Simon appeared to be making an old and shopworn equation wherein white racism is somehow balanced by black militants pressing for constitutional rights, as in Mississippi and Alabama it had been popular to equate SNCC with the Ku Klux Klan. But he did suggest that the White Hats disband. He also called for the appointment of a "fair" police chief, the naming of blacks to various city offices, and bi-racial business hiring practices.*

*While Simon was criticized either for going too far or not far enough in his report he also was praised by many blacks and whites for having the courage to come to Cairo and make a public report at a time when most Illinois politicians at all levels were afraid to take any stand that might hurt their careers.

Two months later, a special committee of the Illinois House of Representatives, issued a rather bland critique of Cairo. Unlike Simon, it found that the White Hats "appears to be a vigilante group." Like Simon, it suggested more job integration and favored enforcement of civil rights law. But it stressed the racial polarization of Cairo as if it were a new phenomenon in a city that had relegated blacks to an inferior status for more than a century.

"The ultimate solution to all of these problems will be a reasonable sharing of economic and political opportunity among all facets of the community and the mutual prosperity of blacks and whites in the area," it said, and after presenting this stunning insight the committee retired from the field.

The role of Gov. Ogilvie in Cairo is difficult to characterize. He helped to pressure the White Hats out of existence, as noted earlier, and then moved against vigilanteism in general, sending state police into Cairo to bolster crumbling local law enforcement. The governor said at the time that "white citizens, deputized by the sheriff and coroner, were patrolling the streets, stopping people and causing a serious problem for regular constituted law enforcement officials." But the cynical might wonder at the timing of things and question the impetus to action. A black boycott is begun in April. Two months later in June, white businessmen are howling. On one day, Governor Ogilvie forces the vigilantes to disband. On the next, his attorney general William J. Scott says to the black community: "Now is the time for the blacks to show their good faith by lifting the boycott."

That is, since the state has moved against illegal vigilantes threatening the public order, blacks should end their legal protest—using the weapon of boycott —against an establishment it feels is exploiting it in defiance of civil rights law and democratic principles. The state police, initially praised by many blacks for even-handed law enforcement, eventually provoke bitter condemnation for raids on Pyramid Court. With the exception of the levees, nothing positive ever seems to survive long in "Little Egypt."

Governor Ogilvie, following demonstrations outside his office in which dozens are arrested including

two white nuns, announced in July, 1969, a $5 million low income housing program for Cairo which would produce 250 apartments (Four years later, the program had not produced a single unit). United Front leader, the Reverend Charles Koen, denounced the proposal as "trickery" with no guarantee that anything more than an initial $290,000 grant would be forthcoming. And he called on the governor to recall his personal representative in Cairo, Paul Wisner. Mr. Wisner, destined to become Executive Director of the Illinois Human Resources Commission, is said by Rev. Koen to have "a complete lack of understanding and ability to work with blacks."

Later, Governor Ogilvie's black aide, Leon N. Perry, lashes back at Rev. Koen after asserting that "Cairo's problems are basically economic rather than racial". "I reject as being utterly untrue and without merit Koen's ridiculous allegation that Governor Ogilvie has acted in any manner other than in the best interests of the citizens of Cairo," Perry tells the Cairo Citizen.

Rev. Koen, who in 1971 will embark on a 48-day protest fast that leaves him close to death, is accused by Perry of "ambitions that far exceed the boundaries of Cairo." Governor Ogilvie's aide then makes this suggestion: "Since Rev. Koen has now realized his dream of being a national figure, is it not correct and proper for the black community of Cairo to choose themselves another leader . . . one whose entire mind, time and attitude is geared to the problems of Cairo and its people?"*

Federal Inaction

If the state's behavior raises more questions than it answers, at least Springfield was demonstrating concern that Cairo remain in the latter half of the 20th century rather than retreat in disarray toward the past. But the Federal government—except for alarms sounded by the Commission on Civil Rights and its Illinois affiliates—was doing virtually nothing. A long public record existed of citizen complaint that civil rights law was disregarded in Cairo. Complaint does not automatically constitute a valid charge. But one looked in vain for Justice Department intervention to weigh the charges during those critical years when the lawful and orderly processes of American government were being riddled by gunfire.

In 1970 and 1971, a self-styled Federal "task force" made some generally unsuccessful attempts to institute programs that would improve the overall welfare of Cairo. It failed, the Commission will hear, because the local power sources would not cooperate. But law enforcement is not required to solicit the cooperation of lawbreakers. If vigilantes were operating in Cairo as the governor and state legislature suggested, if 40 percent of the city's residents had been subjected to infringement on First Amendment rights by local ordinances declared unconstitutional, if segregated public housing persisted in defiance of federal law, then why did not Washington promptly intervene? That question and various answers to it would be a major concern of the Commission hearings in 1972.

Private Action

But in the meantime, it remained for a private group to press for judicial law and order. The national organization called the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law opened a storefront office in Cairo in September, 1969. Over the next three years, it would make legal attacks on many fronts against what it considered violations of black civil rights designed, among other things, to harass and ultimately destroy the militant movement in Cairo. When, for example, blacks in the movement charged harassment arrests for traffic violations and the like, the Committee successfully sought jury trials for the alleged offenders. The cost of trials to authorities in money and time as opposed to summary

*The Rev. Charles Koen said publicly in the **St. Louis Post-Dispatch:** "Ever since I've been 16, my desire to help the poor, suffering black man has been the most consistent and overriding motivation in my life."

In a private interview, he said: "We in the United Front never forgot how people around the country were unaware of black oppression here in the early and mid 60's because the news did not get out. We had to establish a national public relations vehicle to make these things known. Perry was chosen to denounce that action and try to discredit me, to make our movement seem a gimmick. But he went too far, overplayed his hand, and the governor eventually replaced him."

findings by a local judge soon brought a sharp reduction in such arrests.* The Committee also obtained court orders forcing police to protect civil rights marchers and when these proved ineffective it brought contempt actions.

Jake Bleaveans, a volunteer attorney who headed the office, described his position in the eyes of most white Cairo-ites. "I'm the lawyer for the niggers," he said. "And for the Commies and for the people who want to burn down the town."

One result can be seen today in the Committee office. It is a Xerox machine, possibly the only one in the country with a bullet hole, the memento of a nighttime sniper attack.

The Lawyers' Committee exemplifies the ironies that occur within America's racial dilemma as authority tries to deal with a pervasive problem using a fragmented approach that must balance a black concession with a white one, never resolving the total tension, the incompatible disparity at the core. For example, the Committee initially drew most of its resources from church groups and professional contributions from leading law offices. Later, the Cairo office was funded by the OEO at the request of Governor Ogilvie and over local white objections. It was also Governor Ogilvie who sent state troopers into Cairo, and blacks charged that in a series of incidents the troopers stood by while local police beat demonstrators and themselves participated in searches of black homes, roughing up and arresting occupants in the process. The Alexander County Circuit Court—which blacks did not regard as a sympathetic body—ruled the searches were illegal and dismissed all charges. Civil damage suits then were brought against State Police Supervisor Bill Reineking and other officers.

Soon after, on Oct. 24, 1971, Supervisor Reineking was singled out by Gov. Ogilvie as "one of the ten top state employees who consistently maintain the highest standards of job performance." The citation noted that he had "taken the brunt of published criticism and censure by the Cairo United Front and has two civil law suits filed against him in private court." Filing the suits was the Lawyers' Committee that Gov. Ogilvie helped to fund.

*Results of harassment arrests can sometimes escalate widely. Rev. Koen, working in St. Louis with the Black Economic Union, became the object of police attention in 1968. He was stopped there for a faulty license plate bulb. At the station house, there was a struggle involving him and 15 policemen. Both his hands were broken and two patrolmen later suspended. But Rev. Koen was convicted of assault and when the conviction was upheld in 1971, he began the fast that almost killed him.

The Travail of a Mayor

While outside governments and groups were or were not doing their own thing in Cairo, local government there lurched on. This account cannot begin to describe all the machinations during the tumultuous years from 1967 to now. It can briefly describe the experience of one mayor—Peter Thomas—in order to give some idea of the complex challenges faced by even well-intentioned white authority under pressure to reform overnight a racist way of life that had been countenanced for a century by the State of Illinois and the nation.

Thomas was appointed Mayor by the City Council after Mayor Stenzel's tearful resignation in 1969. A middle-aged Ford dealer, Thomas had—like Rev. Koen—been born poor. "I spent six years in an orphanage here in Cairo," he said in a Southern Illinoisan newspaper interview. "I managed to get a high school education and after I got out of high school I went to work. I worked in the mills and carried cross ties and drove taxicabs anything I could do to eat."

Somewhere along the line, Thomas apparently developed a social conscience. "I realize that in the past there have been injustices done to black people, not only in Cairo but all over the world," he said. "I feel these problems should be dealt with but I don't approve of the way the United Front is trying to obtain equal privileges . . . [it] thinks that as the mayor I shouldn't make a move until I consult them."

Mayor Thomas, trying to walk a mythical middle line between the races, made radical moves that antagonized white segregationists yet did not earn him the support of black militants. He welcomed a survey of the police department by the International Asso-

ciation of Chiefs of Police (IACP), a respected and conservative group of professionals, only to have the survey results suppressed by his all-white City Council. He also encouraged the Federal "task force," writing them that a "successful solution to the problems in Cairo requires an integrated program progressing on several dimensions simultaneously." But he could not prevail against white opposition to anything that smacked of integration.

Through his efforts, a black man named Norman Seavers was appointed to the City Council, the first member of his race ever to serve. The appointment, however, was made without consulting with the United Front and Mayor Thomas caught fire from Rev. Koen: "Pete Thomas must learn that the whites do not choose black leaders for the blacks of Cairo," Rev. Koen said. "We have nothing against Mr. Seavers. However, we protest the immoral and unethical way in which the city tries to prove its racial goodwill by trying to play one black against the entire community."

And the Mayor said of Rev. Koen: "When Koen came upon the scene in Cairo, the blacks needed leadership and this administration tried for over one year to work with Koen and the United Front. All our overtures toward working out problems were ignored by Koen and the United Front while terror in the streets was encouraged by him and his misguided followers."

The Mayor said he refused to allow one of his salesman to seek office in the UCCA—(successor to the White Hats) "Not and work here." Then he publicly suggested in the *Cairo Citizen* that Rev. Koen was living rich off United Front donations from around the country. "We ask how a man who apparently draws no salary wears such expensive clothing and drives such expensive automobiles," Mayor Thomas said.

Thomas became a board member of all-white Camelot School. He backed a black bar owner and former Golden Gloves boxer named James Aveary who came from nowhere—and quickly retired to the same place—to form The People for the Improvement of Cairo.

"I am not bothered by the 'Uncle Tom' label," Mr. Aveary said in a UPI story. "Any black who opposes them [The United Front] is called an Uncle Tom, and any white who opposes them is called a racist. If they call the governor a racist, why should little old me worry about being called an Uncle Tom? We won't ask for as much as the United Front is asking."

And Mayor Thomas told the Front that any future meetings with the City Council "must include the People for Improvement of Cairo, a new organization in the black community."

It was, of course, an old white ploy in the racial struggle, North and South, to disparage militant black leadership that had first forced the issue of racism into the open and had developed a constituency in the process, and to insist that the white power structure was perfectly agreeable to sitting down with other "reasonable" black spokesmen. The Evers brothers—Medgar and Charles—had experienced it in Mississippi, Dr. Robert Hayling in St. Augustine, Florida, Martin Luther King in a dozen places . . . In Cairo, the Front endured but Mayor Thomas did not. His overtures to blacks did not dissuade all black policemen from resigning in November, 1970, after St. Columbia's Roman Catholic Church—a black center—came under heavy fire from white policemen.* But those overtures marked him.

The next year, he was re-elected but former White Hats gained seats on the City Council and his days were numbered. Before 1971 was out, Thomas' authority had been undercut by the Council and he resigned, replaced by an ex-White Hat clothing merchant named Joseph Walder.

"There is no doubt in my mind," he said once, "That when my term ends my business will quit just like that, because I've tried to do what I think is right. Consequently, I've made a lot of people mad at me."

So it went in Cairo, a racial war of attrition which seemed no closer to being resolved in 1973 than it

*Black policemen earlier had charged discrimination in promotions, use of black officers only in black communities, refusal of the chief to make white patrolmen ride with blacks in squad cars, and blatant department racism.

was in 1967 or 1867. One searches the history for signs of true accord, for assurances that past sins against the form and spirit of democracy will not be repeated. But they are not there. What one finds are lulls in battle, small and always threatened advances toward racial justice gained after enormous outlay of time, energy and physical sacrifice. Miraculously, there are few residents—black or white—with bodily scars from all the violence. But there are raw psychic wounds and they are not healing. Boarded-up shop windows are monuments to small business failures on streets where boycott and fear have taken their toll of commerce. Sidewalks are sparsely populated and youth is conspicuously scarce. Occasionally, young blacks and whites are seen together, shooting baskets on an outdoor court in the Pyramid Courts project or talking briefly on languid, sunbaked street corners. But the poison of adult racism has seeped into the wellsprings of the young. White teenage social life centers around a private club called Oriac from which blacks are excluded. Oriac, of course, spells Cairo backwards. Backwards. So much seemed backwards when the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights came to Cairo in March, 1972.

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PREAMBLE:
"We Have Come To Cairo . ."

The hearings open on the morning of March 23rd. They will continue both day and night for three days in a community that is as heavily armed as any in the country, a community where racial tension has often been only a trigger-pull away from violence. Cairo is again tense and everyone entering the hearing room is carefully, courteously searched by Federal marshals. Commissioner Maurice B. Mitchell, Chancellor of the University of Denver, explains to the audience:

"We and the marshals know that the vast majority of the citizens of this city have no intention or desire to disrupt or to otherwise impede the orderly process of this hearing. The Federal marshals, however, have in their best judgment determined that the security measures that they have instituted are necessary in order to assure the safety of everyone in this room and to provide the kind of atmosphere in which this hearing can be conducted with dignity and dispatch."

Commissioner Frankie Freeman, a St. Louis attorney, is a veteran of many such hearings North and South. Mrs. Freeman says:

"We have come to Cairo for specific reasons. The Commission has received allegations from individuals and organizations all over the country that extensive and overt racial discrimination exists here. We have also been told that government officials at all levels have not utilized all of their authority to assist Cairo in dealing with these problems, and in some instances have abused their authority and contributed to the worsening problems in Cairo."

"We realize that information which is received from secondary sources or from persons outside a community can often be misleading and distort the truth. We have come here, therefore, to ascertain for ourselves the nature and extent of problems, and among other issues to seek the reasons why Federal statutes have not been enforced or have not been effective, and to find out how similar situations in other communities may be rectified."

"I want to emphasize again that in turning our attention to the racial situation in Cairo we also will learn a great deal about similar situations in other communities throughout the country. In this way we hope to gather information and arrive at conclusions that will be enlightening and of benefit to Americans everywhere."

Finally, John Mc Knight, acting Chairman of the Illinois State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, offers this perspective. He describes how six years earlier his Committee held hearings in the very same courtroom.

"The Committee," he says, "heard many citizens describe the discriminatory practices and policies of the local institutions. Although local and state officials were frequently cited as the agents of discrimination, many statements pointed to direct Federal involvement in racially restrictive practices . . . If the American government is to insure equal opportunity and participation, it must know, at the very least, where its own programs are inadequate. Unfortunately, we found that Cairo was not a case of Federal overseeing; it was a case of Federal oversight."

"It is our hope," he concludes, "that as a result of this hearing those responsible for the health and welfare of this community, the residents as well as Federal, state and local officials, will begin to make those changes that are so clearly needed."

The hearing is underway.

LAW AND ORDER

"A white cop put Rev. Koen's birth certificate on the Police bulletin board and wrote Bastard on it ..... I heard radio reports saying Nigger this, Coon that ..... In some arrests they would have a submachine gun against a black guy's head, begging him to move so they could kill him."

Interview with former black Patrolman Wilbert Beard—June, 1972

"I don't think from what I have seen of police-community relation, the total failure it's been in almost every instance it's been enacted in every other city in the country—and this I am thoroughly well studied on—that we'll not have it in Cairo."

Ex-White Hat and present Police Commissioner James Dale, Jr. testifying at CRC hearing—March

The first Cairo resident to testify is what the Commission calls an "overview witness," one familiar with the broad local picture. But the Reverend J.I. Cobb, who has been quoted earlier, more accurately bears witness to an underview of the community, the view of the minority trying to struggle up.

"Every administration for the past 20 years," he says, "I have visited the City Councils and have talked to them, every administration. . . and been in conference with the Mayor. Sometimes with groups, at times alone . . . and my plea was that the total community should be involved and the minority group should not always be represented by the same people."

" . . . in most cases the City Council would sit quiet and listen and then in many cases sneer or show of lack of interest, and—if that did not take place—there was a lack of action. And then when attempts were made by (white) people in the community to set up certain things among themselves and those people were not afraid of being called—

*City Commissioner Carl Meisenheimer had praised Beard on October 28, 1969 for easing racial tensions. Beard discovered that a man wounded in an alleged racial shooting actually had been committing a burglary at the time.

well, people that had the courage to step forward and were not afraid to be called 'nigger lovers' . . . And this is a thing that it seems to me that most whites don't want to be called, and that is a 'nigger lover.' "

Rev. Cobb testifies that some federal relief programs temporarily providing food and jobs were helpful during those 20 years. But he adds that the "cause of much frustration and unrest among Negroes is because of the dragging of the feet of the Federal government in many areas . . . I would say that the Federal government is moving just a little bit too slow across the country." One area of too-slow change his testimony identifies is police administration.

Today, Rev. Cobb is the first black in Cairo history to sit on the three-member Police and Fire Commission. What 20 years of pleading before councils did not achieve, pressures arising from militant protest has. But Rev. Cobb continues in minority status on the Police Commission and there is only one black man out of 20 officers.

"It is very bad," he says. "There are certain areas that at certain times the Police Department doesn't even police. Where there are large concentrations of Negroes such as Pyramid Courts there are times when there is absolutely no protection in the area.* If you call police, they're not going out there . . . When it comes to the attitude of the police toward the community, the attitude of the majority of the white community or the majority race is reflected within the department itself."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: " . . . who do you think is telling the Police Department not to go to Pyramid Courts?"

THE REVEREND MR. COBB: "That would be the decision made or given by the Police Commissioner [James Dale Jr.] possibly with the sanction of the City Council itself."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "You believe there is such a policy in existence in Cairo?"

THE REVEREND MR. COBB: "Probably unwritten, but it is the policy and practice."

Then he gives this Cairo underview of law and order:

"The way we see it from where we stand is that every time that we strive to do something to help ourselves that there are some more policemen armed with guns, more ammunition is bought to put a stop to the drive to better the condition of the Negro. This is the way that we see it in this community, and this is the way it is seen across the country.

"More guns."

Guns will also be on the mind of the Rev. Koen as his testimony as United Front leader develops. The long fast has left him broken in health and he supports himself with a staff walking to the witness chair. Once he had been either a spellbinding preacher or expert rabble-rouser, depending on your view of him. Now, his voice is barely audible, words often slurred.

"I think the big problem that exists here—I don't 'think,' I know it is—the major problem is this: law enforcement. . . . There's been an obvious breakdown for the last three years particularly. There's been a breakdown—since, I know from my childhood up to the age of 19 before I went to college—with law and order."

He accuses state police of illegal raids on Pyramid Courts in which "some black citizens were brutally beaten and some were thrown in jail . . ." Rev. Koen refers to a $75,000 grant to Cairo by the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission, part of a federally-funded program designed to upgrade police departments with special emphasis in community relations. Only around $6000 was spent and Rev. Koen charges that ". . . this past summer the remaining fund that was left in this account was pulled back by the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission, because there were guns purchased and the City Police

*The Reverend Mr. Cobb testified out of personal experience. On the night of January 4, 1970, his car was fired into. Black police officer Wilbert Beard, who was still with the Cairo Police Department at the time, took a rifle from an unmarked police car he believed was involved in the shooting. Beard fired test rounds from the rifle, then dug slugs from Cobb's vehicle and mailed both groups of bullets to State Police Headquarters in Springfield for a ballistics check. Beard received no reply from the state police and when he called them they said they had never received the package.

Department could not be accountable for all the guns which were purchased."

Rev. Koen's charge that weapons bought with federal tax money disappeared goes unchallenged in the hearing. He makes this connection between the missing guns and the Front's experience with law enforcement:

"We have been forced to bring in lawyers from around the country to defend us on illegal charges, on trumped-up charges, and then we turn around and we see justice on the other hand where guns come up missing [bought] with State and Federal funds . . . and when we find these things out, it was hush-hush. We don't know nothing about what has happened to these cases or what is happening . . . we find that when it comes to justice that we are always on the other end of the stick in terms of receiving injustices."

Rev. Cobb is a newcomer to the field of law enforcement and Rev. Koen is bitterly partisan in his judgment of the Cairo police; their testimony must be weighted accordingly. Witness Charles Vanderbosch is a veteran white lawman with a master's degree in political science who advocates strict professional neutrality in law enforcement. He has served 18 years on the Chicago Police Department and eight years with the International Association of Chiefs of Police where he is assistant director of field operations. In February and March, 1970, along with two retired officers from the New York City and Tucson Departments, he surveyed the Cairo police at the invitation of state officials and then-Mayor Thomas.

IACP Survey

Mr. Vanderbosch tells the hearing: "We have done studies in the Deep South, in the upper New England states and the Midwest, and we have never found another Cairo."

Then he summarizes some findings of the survey and the following random samples are consistent with the context from which they are excerpted.

- "I would say that in 1970 the Cairo Police Department was barren of professionalism . . . However, from what I understand, this has been subsequently altered, that after we left the State of Illinois did conduct some training.
- "We found that there were some members in the Police Department and also city officials who were insensitive to the racial conditions confronting them. The solution seemed to be to 'blast away and we'll win.'
- "We found that the racial strife and its related incidents of violence were the outstanding police problems in the community.
- "We saw where the police did not give the Pyramid Courts any police protection at the time of the coverage . . . And they were questioned: 'Why don't you go inside this project if these people are shooting at you and you're firing back in self-defense —why not go in there and try to find out—knock on doors, do some investigation and find out who is doing the shooting?' And they felt that they would be endangered and it really was not worth the effort, and no one in the city government forced them to really conduct a follow-up investigation or preliminary investigation.
- "We found that the white citizens also are exposed to . . . abuse. In fact, when we were here doing the field work, some of our consultants were riding in the police vehicles with the Cairo police officers, and a number of stops were made, traffic, field inquiry type of stuff, and they were rather taken aback at the crudeness, at the vulgarity of the police officers talking to the citizens of Cairo.
- "The Police Department was totally undisciplined at the time. There was no provision made for disciplinary actions. And up to the time we were there no one had been subjected to disciplinary measures. They were using up thousands of rounds if ammunition and there was very few reports made of the shooting incidents . . . And the city just went along as if nothing was happening.
- "We don't know and I don't think anyone in Cairo does know, what the crime rate is in this community because the department at that time did not have records, and the records they did have we just really could not read and get a picture of it . . . There's a possibility that complaints made against the Police Department are not recorded so 'We don't

have any problem with the people in our community.' "

The report pointed out that the Cairo Police Department "despite its many shortcomings . . . should not be made the scapegoat for the sociopolitical and economic problems plaguing the city." Mr. Vanderbosch's professional appraisal contained in the IACP report was given to the City Council in August, 1970.

"Well, we made approximately 200 recommendations in this report to improve the quality of police services in the city of Cairo," he says. "To my knowledge, none with the exception of the training which the State Police gave the people have been implemented or carried out."

Finally, he is asked whether the present chief of police or police commissioner has contacted him concerning the recommendations.

"We mailed the report to the city of Cairo either in July or August, 1970. We haven't heard from the city since that time."

Four Cases in Point

The IACP findings, damning though they are, may be out of date. Have standards of conduct that shocked impartial investigators in 1970 improved in 1972? The hearing calls two former black police officers, and two black residents of Cairo. The police officers resigned from the Department after what they claim was racial harrassment—including suspension—convinced them that black cops in Cairo were handcuffed by racism while trying to discharge their duties.

The men are Russell Deberry and Vernon Hodge (citizens with law enforcement complaints), and Wilbert Beard and Robert Meeks (formerly policemen); each must be considered unsympathetic to a police department they believed mistreated them. Mr. Hodge tells a story of minor harassment. One night in February, ***1972***, his parked car is sideswiped outside his home. A witness helps him find the white lady driver who did it. Police are called and depositions given. Hodge says he was told to return to the station to pick up the report.

"I went there," he testifies, "And I looked down on the paper, and they didn't have that the lady hit my car and kept on going, you know. So I asked why didn't they have this on the paper? So this man told me that he would have to see her about this, you know. It wasn't on the report that she hit my car and kept going. So he told me if I didn't get out of there, you know, he would lock me up, you know, where I belonged."

It is the kind of discourteous treatment that blacks are accustomed to at the hands of some white police and to which white civilians are not all strangers.

March 21, ***1972***. Witness Deberry is riding with some friends, and as they turn into the intersection of Washington and Sycamore Streets, they see "a police officer had another black man pulled over to the street and he was doing a lot of provocative talking. He was cursing the guy."

The Deberry car stopped.

"The reason for that," Deberry says, "was that so many incidents has happened with the Police Department and blacks that if other blacks see one black pulled over by a police officer or police officers, they know that he's going to be subjected to harassments . . . He's going to be hollered at, talked at like he's not human at all. So then they usually come to the aid and say, you know, What's the trouble? Or they try to form more than one person standing there in order to see that some kind of justice is given, you know, in its right perspective."

Deberry says that the detained driver explained that he had first been stopped for a defective taillight. The driver said he had bought a new light but that it kept sputtering. He was stopped again, he said, and told the officer that it must be defective wiring which could not be corrected until morning. The driver, according to Deberry, lived 15 feet from the second police flagdown and he asked if he could park the car at the spot overnight.

"And he was trying to explain this," Deberry testifies. "But the officer wouldn't let him explain it, you know. He just kept saying, 'You're going to go to jail. You're going to go to jail.' You know, 'I'm a

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police officer and you're going to respect this badge.'

"So he got on the radio . . . and he called somewhere or somebody, but in less time than you can say—a miracle of beauty it was like—I don't know how many people were around the car, you know, that was local whites, some merchants from some of the boycotted areas downtown . . ."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "You are stating that in answer to the patrolman's call additional policemen came and also additional non-police civilians who were armed?"

MR. DEBERRY: "That's correct."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "What happened at that point?"

MR. DEBERRY: "The police and non-police were all together . . . like if you hadn't known they were local [civilians] you would have thought they were policemen too . . . The police came up . . . they unstrapped their holsters, pulled their pieces—their guns—out. And some of the local whites had their guns and were like kneeling behind the cars and over the fenders with the guns."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Did any of the people who were apprehended have a gun drawn?"

MR. DEBERRY: "No."

The arrival of an Alexander County deputy sheriff prevented further escalation, the witness says, and blacks and whites "went on our respective ways." Again, a small incident with large violent potential but no grave finale. Yet nearly three years after the White Hats were supposedly disbanded, vigilantes apparently remained tied in to the police radio net, drawing guns with police sanction. It recalled earlier, violent days that former Police Sergeant Beard depicts for the hearing.

"Fellow police officers [would] use remarks like, 'We're going to go out to Pyramid Courts and what we should do is bomb them all out or blow them all up,' you know, and stuff like this. And there was also statements made, you know, like 'That nigger this' or 'That nigger that.' Which I had to verbally reprimand a radio operator for one night . . . And what happened after that I don't know. I never heard of any, you know, results from any complaints of mistreatment . . . of blacks by policemen."

Former black patrolman Meeks adds another historical vignette: "I had this incident where a radio operator, patrolman, made a remark like, 'Shoot this nigger in the back' or something like that. And it just so happened that I was in the station at the time, and I went into the radio room and confronted this operator, also confronting the Chief because he was sitting there with him . . . the Chief got up and left. He made some remark about going to the Mark Twain or something." (A local bar and restaurant).

Echoes of Tom Sawyer and Nigger Jim do persist along the Mississippi, and they emerge briefly in the most shocking tale the Commission hears of contemporary law and order in Cairo. Again, the witness is Deberry, the date Sept. 29, 1971, when he says he was bringing his pregnant wife to a hospital after one false labor. Again, he encountered a black motorist stopped by police, this time spreadeagled against a squadcar, surrounded by white guns.

"So I came up . . . I didn't have time to say anything about where I was going or to explain anything as to why I was in that vicinity where they had this black guy against the car . . . I was snatched from behind. I was hit up side of the head and called by name by the police officer . . . He just said, 'Deberry, get your ass in the car.'

"And I said, 'Like for what? Why am I arrested? Like, I'm trying to get a doctor."*

"And he says, 'You're going to get a doctor all right, you know, like when we get you to the station we're going to see that you get what you're supposed to be getting.' "

At the station house, Deberry says that the current Cairo Police Chief Bowers said: " 'I want every nigger in Cairo rounded up, and if it means busting heads to bring them to jail, I want them brought in.' "

Eventually, Deberry learned the reason for the night's excitement. A black youth had reportedly slugged a white woman—kin to a policeman—and stolen her purse. A number of black teenagers, 14 and 15, had been rounded up and stood with De-

*Later in the hearing, Deberry will testify about another experience when he sought medical attention—for an aching tooth—in Cairo.

berry in the police station, arms raised overhead against the wall. Deberry says Chief Bowers told them:

" 'I'm not going to take anything from any nigger, and you're going to find out that I'm not the punk chiefs that's been here. We've had three or four, whichever it was, to resign. But I'm not going to resign . . . And another thing is that none of my police officers' wives, mothers or grandmothers get knocked in the face or their pocketbook snatched. If they do, some nigger is going to die for it, you know.' "

Deberry testifies that minutes later, Chief Bowers spoke to him recalling their childhood when they played together, even as Tom Sawyer and Nigger Jim.

"Chief Bowers, he says, 'Hell, I've known you a long time.' He says, 'I used to play basketball in the projects.' I say, 'Yeah, I know you did.' He says, 'Then why do you hate my guts?' I say, 'It's not a matter of hating you but I don't like anything that's against me.' . . . He says, 'Like, I was a little hotheaded tonight, the reason I was saying all those words I said.' You know, he says, 'Like I tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to let you go.' "

According to Deberry, while he was being held without any charge, former White Hat and present Police Commissioner Dale strode around headquarters cradling a .45 calibre Thompson machine gun. He quotes the Commissioner as saying:

" 'Before you go, I want you to take a message to the black people of Cairo, and that is that if anything like this goes down again there's going to be some bloodshed in the streets and we don't give a damn how old they are or how young they are.' "

As a parting gesture, Deberry says, a patrolman flung his car keys out the door when he asked to have them returned.

Police Officials Testify

"I don't personally consider that we have had any racial problems," says Police Commissioner Dale when he testifies. ". . . the racial aspect of this has been far overblown . . . We haven't had the antagonism between the black and white races to even a small degree of what you have had in many other towns who haven't had the notoriety and publicity we have had in Cairo . . .

"We have had," the Commissioner concedes, "many incidences of criminal damage to property, many instances of criminal damage to body also. People have been shot. Things have been burned. But it's been for one sole purpose and this has gained money through contributions and certain individuals have profited by it, and this has all been in the nature of civil rights."

For the record, he identifies the civil rights movement as the cause and not the effect of racial difficulties in Cairo. Inexplicably, neither Commissioner Dale nor Chief Bowers is asked to make a specific response to Deberry's account of what happened in the station house on the night of Sept. 17. Nor are any of the detained black teenagers called to articulate how it feels growing up in a city where the Police Chief vows that "some nigger is going to die" if a purse is snatched in the future. Chief Bowers, a $9000-a-year 4-year "veteran" of the force, says he has never seen unnecessary force used on black or white.

"I was on the street before I assumed the office that I have now," the Chief testifies," and in handling individual black citizens or black complainants or the subjects of the complaints, I have seen in many instances the officers bend over backwards not to perpetrate these things that have been brought forward, for the simple reason as many of us know the pendulum has swung terrifically to the left and it's impossible for an officer to do the things that have been said that has been done without losing his position."

Chief Bowers then says he believes "the safeguards against anyone being victimized is a very good thing. This did not exist in the past." But in the next breath he, along with Commissioner Dale, denies virtually all the negative findings made by the IACP. The Chief says he advertised over radio for black applicants but none replied and the Commissioner, questioned about his hiring practices for police and firemen, declares that "I don't care whether he's black, pink, purple, what color he is."

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The Chief denies that Pyramid Courts go unpatrolled and swears that he investigates all citizens' complaints against the police. Although he is vague about the number of complaints received, he is certain none has ever been substantiated. He denies the IACP charge of poor record keeping and offers some of his own statistics to prove that blacks are not discriminated against.

They show that in the six months from September, 1971 to March, 1972, 714 whites were arrested, 240 blacks; whites serving 508 days in jail, blacks 156; whites fined $12,175, blacks $2896. Chief Bowers does not volunteer, nor is he asked, how these figures compare with those from before the time when the Lawyers Committee presence* and several law suits served to brake arrests that blacks charged were made promiscuously and some court decisions found were made illegally.

An Aborted Program

Although it seems that Dale and Bowers, in comparison to previous witnesses, are talking about a police department other than Cairo's, all witnesses who have not been comatose for a decade are aware of certain community dissatisfactions. Commissioner Dale is asked whether the IACP recommendation for a Police Department community relations program has been followed? He characterizes such programs elsewhere as "total failures" and says that he hasn't seen any that were not heavy in "rake-off." He claims that the $75,000 police improvement program given to Cairo by the state was top-heavy on administration expenses.

"It had $25,000 salaries in there which is not—" he says, "This is not a $25,000-a-year community. So I vetoed the program as well as several other people, and I would veto it again."

Actually, as subsequent testimony shows, the highest salary budgeted for the program which Rev. Koen charged with producing missing weapons but no community presence at police headquarters, was for an $18,000 director.

"The city officials indicated," says James R. Rush, Criminal Justice Planning Director for the Greater Egypt Regional Planning and Development Commission, "that they had been attempting to hire someone, that the salary would have to be almost that high to convince someone from outside the area to come to Cairo and head up a program . . ."

GENERAL COUNSEL: So that figure was put there at the request of city officials?

MR. RUSH: "Yes."

"Our agency," says Arthur J. Bilek, Chairman of the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission, trying to explain the difficulties of working with Cairo's revolving-door officialdom, "dealt with a variety of local officials. We dealt with Chief of Police Klutz, Chief of Police Bell, Chief of Police Peterson, Chief of Police Burke, and Chief of Police Seriak, Mayors Leo Stenzel, Pete Thomas and James B. Walder. Now, it's very possible that during that long progression of dealings with a variety of people, Chief of Police No. 3 may not have agreed with the decision that was reached with Chief of Police No. 1 and so on."

Rush, Bilek and John Jemilo, Regional Administrator for the U.S. Justice Department's Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, all testify as the Commission tries to sort out responsibility for the seeming failure of state and federal dollars (and authority) to infuse new life in Cairo's peace-keeping apparatus. Rush cites pressures having nothing to do with high-salary considerations to explain why the city turned back nearly all the $75,000 offered. He displays a copy of a newspaper called the *Tri-State Informer* which bears the seal of the (White) Citizens Council with its slogan "States' Rights, Racial Integrity" and contains this paragraph:

"Support those elected officials who stand firm on law and order. We publicly denounce weak-kneed politicians who think the only solution to our community problems lies in state and federal grants. Community and police relations boards are nothing more than police control which in the end only

*The Illinois Law Enforcement Commission also maintained a Public Defender Project in Cairo offering services to the underprivileged in both criminal and civil cases.

*handcuffs police and increases the strength of criminals."**

Another flyer produced by Rush achieves a bumper-sticker condensation of this philosophy: "We need to support our local police by turning down Federal grants."

Rush also claims that "some representatives of the black community indicated to me that unless all black representatives on the advisory board which we were attempting to establish were chosen by a particular group within the community, they would not be supportive of the program." He does not expand in this to identify the group—Rev. Koen's United Front, for example, or boxer-bar owner Aveary's People for Improvement of Cairo—but concludes: ". . . essentially what we were running into was the traditional stand-off with not being able to pull out the middle road, if you will."

If you will or won't accept the premise that this racial "middle road" actually exists, you may still question what the U.S. Justice Department was doing while Cairo floundered judicially. Mr. Jemilo, Justice Department witness, is asked what he knows about the law enforcement grant largely composed of Federal money.

"I have no information on that specific grant," he replies.

A listener wonders whether Jemilo might have carried some notes or something to Cairo once he bothered to come at all.

Bilek has precise information. On Dec. 21, 1971, the present Mayor Walder officially informed him that the City Council had agreed the $75,000 grant should be rescinded after only $6538 was expended. Bilek is asked directly, "What steps has the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission taken to assist Cairo with its problems in the field of law enforcement?" The answer elicited, like so many others in so many hearings, is not a model of clarity. There is a long list of planning studies and grants for everything from the $15,660 IACP probe of Cairo to a $40,000 "comprehensive criminal justice planning grant to Cairo, Alexander County and *nine adjacent counties*." What $40,000 whacked up among so many jurisdictions means is anybody's guess. So much of the state aid he lists overlaps city and county lines that it is impossible to pinpoint the effort in strife-battered Cairo. And nowhere in the confusion of figures is there a clear sense of expectations, a timetable for results, nowhere an awareness of the hateful gunfire rattling around the city for years or a determination that it must be quieted for good.

Bilek does say that any grants carry the requirement that applicant cities will not "engage in any type of discrimination, including racial." Commissioner Freeman, with the rescinded $75,000 grant apparently in mind, asks:

"Does your office initiate any investigations on its own to determine whether there is in fact racial discrimination in the employment by the grantee?"

MR. BILEK: "We have not to date unless there has been some reason to believe that that is in fact occurring."

COMMISSIONER FREEMAN: "If the grantee . . . would receive a grant of $11,000 and then would set up a circus and nobody complained about it, would you assume that because you had received no complaints that there was no need to make an investigation to determine whether the funds were being spent in accordance with the terms of the grant "

MR. BILEK: "Yes, Commissioner."

Commissioner Mitchell is curious about the $15,660 that the state spent for the Cairo Police study by the IACP.

"What do you usually do when you get a report like that?" he asks.

The answer from Bilek, Chairman of the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission:

"We have had a number of those in Illinois and what we then attempt to do is to get the community

*The Informer was published by Carl Helt, owner of the Cairo News and Music Co. He was also an official of the UCCA, successor organization of the White Hats. When black demonstrators marched, his shop's loudspeaker blared speeches by Alabama Gov. George Wallace. Former Mayor Pete Thomas, who refused to let one of his salesmen hold office in UCCA, advertised in the now-defunct Informer. He called it "strictly business," and added: "They panned me pretty good."

that originally asked for the study and received it to implement the recommendations under that study. And we do this in a variety of ways. We deal with the regional planning group, of which Mr. Rush is represented here, and we say to them, 'Now here is a study. Here are the problems identified. Here are the recommendations. Can you work with your local people here and try to get them to do that?' "

Commissioner Mitchell persists: "Is it unusual that in a study that produced such drastic findings that there is no further correspondence with the source of the data? Here is, after all, a man who says this is the most unusual police department in the United States."

MR. RUSH: "I think it's perhaps not that unusual, knowing people. The study, as you have indicated, is a *rather critical study* [emphasis added]. I think the people, the local officials, felt that they had been unjustly criticized and for that reason they have rejected the entire report perhaps for certain items."

Commissioner Mitchell, a trace wearily, concludes: "I'm in a field of work in which a lot of this study activity goes on and people are racing around trying to grab off grants, and I must confess that listening here today has reinforced my private suspicion that we should declare a national moratorium on research and then have a single study to figure out why nobody ever uses any of the research we have ever done before.

"I have no more questions."

IN CAMELOT . . .

"The legendary site of King Arthur's Court was a place where justice, honor and truth reigned supreme. The place where men were united in a brotherhood based upon respect for the dignity and nobility of the individual ..... It remains for the young to strive for perfection and live for an ideal. Camelot was perfection and Camelot will live again ..... in an unlikely place, in a place blessed by nature but marred by man."

The Rev. Larry Potts announcing the establishment of private Camelot School after Cairo schools were integrated. Cairo Citizen—July 16, 1969.

"The Camelot teachers kept telling us we couldn't fail. They told us the colored were like a bunch of animals. Larry Potts gave a speech and said we were competing with blacks. One winter day the classroom was cold and a kid sitting with an overcoat on said he was going back to public school. And a woman teacher said to him, You can go back if you want with those black sons of bitches."

Interview with Brad Holly, 18, who attended both Camelot and Cairo High School—May 28, 1972.

Camelot Parochial School opened in September, 1969, three years after the Federal government found Cairo's schools in violation of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The city's schools were integrated through the familiar expedient of closing black schools and often doubling up enrollment of predominantly white ones. Two new schools were also built. There were predictable initial racial frictions like student fistfights* and teacher struggles over assignments, curricula, discipline etc. Often they were struggling over scraps—outdated books, under-equipped labs, inadequate classrooms. With a

*The violence perhaps was magnified by those forces that did not want integration to work. Dr. Morris Osborne, regional director for the U.S. Office of Education's Equal Educational Opportunities, will tell the hearing: "When all of this shooting and everything that was going on, the schools in Cairo have had less police patrol probably than any school in the nation."

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diminishing local tax base and no school tax increase in the previous nine years (a recent increase referendum lost 2½-to-1), Cairo public schools had been steadily deteriorating. This deterioration was coincident with a blackening of enrollment and follows a national pattern. Minority enrollment now stands at 70 percent of 1335 pupils in the Cairo schools.

When Camelot School opened, with Alexander County Commissioner John Dillingham Chairman of its Board of Directors, it attracted 300 pupils from the public schools and approximately 15 teachers. The pupil transfer distorted the black-white ratio in the public schools and at the same time it severely reduced state aid calculated on pupil attendance. Although Camelot is technically open to both races, no black has ever applied. On Sept. 16, 1969, school organizer Rev. Potts—who had been secretary to the post-White Hats UCCA—told J. Anthony Lukas of the N.Y. Times:

"How could they come to a school started by the very people they are trying to destroy?"

Under Illinois law, public school buses were permitted to carry Camelot students to their all-white school. In 1970, although lacking accreditation, Camelot was granted tax exempt status by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. This permitted donors to deduct cash donations to Camelot as "charitable deductions." Jay G. Philpott, IRS District Director, announced the new status in October, 1970, citing the school's public announcement that it was nondiscriminatory.

"Where a school has adopted such an admissions policy," he said, "for purposes of issuing a ruling the IRS will assume that such a policy has been adopted and will be maintained in good faith."

In May, 1971, a formal letter from a Cairo resident charging Camelot with practicing racial segregation was received by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue in Washington. There is no apparent record of any subsequent investigation to determine—in light of the complaint—whether the IRS assumption of Camelot's "good faith" was justified.

The hearing considers two elements in Cairo's struggling and divided educational system—private Camelot and the public schools. Some issues, like Camelot's tax exemption, are distinct; others overlap, like the financial cost to the public schools caused by diminished enrollment, and what is being done to make up the difference. Race touches virtually every aspect as adults armed with old beliefs, prejudices and self-interests battle over young minds, and if the discords heard by the Commission are uniquely Cairo's, the undertones sound today throughout America.

Three men prominent in Camelot's history testify. Jack Greaney is acting headmaster; Rye Eaves is Chairman of the Board; and Tom Madra is both a Camelot organizer and father of a student enrolled there.* Mr. Madra, a well-to-do warehouseman, was in the forefront of the White Hats. A husky, volatile man, he was quoted in a N. Y. Times story on June 23, 1969, explaining the effectiveness of the White Hats:

"Our main deterrent value is that we are untrained and dangerous on the streets. The Guard is trained for restraint and the militants take advantage of it. But ordinary Joes with shotguns are going to defend their property and won't read 'em a card about their rights."

Mr. Madra gives his version of the racial situation preceding Camelot under questioning from Counsel Powell.

MR. MADRA: "I think the beginning of what you would like to call the racial turmoil in our school system was when Preston Ewing [NAACP president], who is now on your staff, pulled black football players—"

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Mr. Ewing is not a member of this staff."

MR. MADRA: "Well he's on the—He signs letters as the secretary of the Illinois Division or something —And he pulled black football players off of the Cairo High School bus a few minutes prior to its departure for its opening game of the season. I think that was in 1967. And he did this because there were no black cheerleaders elected by the student body. Up until that time I think the whites and blacks

*Madra, without children in the public schools, became a leader of the successful effort to defeat the public school tax referendum.

attending school together, they were playing together, they were working together and they had a good athletic team.

"And some of the black boys who were seniors on that bus cried when Preston Ewing pulled them off because there were no black cheerleaders. And, of course, they went up and six of the 11 starting members of the football team were not there and they got the dickens beat out of them.* And I think that was the beginning of the racial—not just the disciplinary problem but the racial problem in our schools."

Mr. Eaves is asked why *he* thinks Camelot was created and he answers:

"Well, one thing I think that was bad for the public schools was the overcrowding of the schools. I don't think our public schools was ready to receive the amount of students that it had to receive when they went to full integration. We took two facilities that was almost filled to capacity and then we closed one of those down and put it into the other one and we got an overcrowding, and I think that any time you get an overcrowding such as that you get turmoil and it's not conducive to good education."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Were there any other circumstances that led you to enroll your students in the Camelot Schools, Mr. Eaves?"

MR. EAVES: "No sir, none that I can think of."

In a community where white parents had long insisted on segregating their children from blacks, Camelot is seen only as a response to spatial, not racial, stresses. This explanation apparently satisfied IRS officials who, Mr. Madra testifies, conferred with Mr. Dillingham, a member of both Camelot and county boards. There are other relationships between the school and local government.

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Would you please describe the method by which the Camelot School obtained the building in which the high school now is housed?"

MR. MADRA: "Well, there's not much question about that—that the people who owned the property gave it to them."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Who owned the property?"

MR. MADRA: "I was part owner of the property."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "How did you get title of that property?"

MR. MADRA: "I bought it at public auction together with three other gentlemen."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "From whom did you buy it?"

MR. MADRA: "From the Cairo public school system."*

GENERAL COUNSEL: "It was, in fact, owned by the Cairo public schools. How much money did the Camelot school have to pay for the building?"

MR. MADRA: "I don't see that's material to this particular hearing but they didn't have to pay anything. We gave it to them as a gift."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "How much did you pay for it?"

MR. MADRA: "I don't think that's material to this investigation, sir."

Attorney John Holland, counsel to the witnesses, instructs Mr. Madra not to answer on the grounds that "it could tend to incriminate him . . . It's immaterial. It's arguing with the witness. And it's abusive."

Despite these dire objections, Mr. Madra eventually answers. The price was $4400. This bought a dozen-room brick structure with grounds in a community where some modest 6-room frame houses on 20 x 50 plots sell for as little as $1500. Since there was little demand for any real estate in Cairo and less for abandoned schoolhouses, the price may have

*Mr. Ewing's account given in an interview contains information lacking in Mr. Madra's: "When the high schools integrated, blacks were in a minority and cheerleaders were elected by popular vote. Some of the black girls had been cheerleaders for 3 years in Sumner High. I asked the schools superintendent to merge the two squads. But nothing was done and a white vote elected only white girls. So we did go to the bus and asked the black players to boycott the game. They did and next week the cheerleaders were integrated."

Both men agree the absence of black players was costly. Cairo lost 88-0.

*Actually, two buildings were purchased—the Elmwood and the Lincoln Schools. At the time, black groups seeking to create a recreation center had approached the city asking how they might buy an abandoned school but the city refused to sell to them.

been correct. But the sale stirs other questions that are not pursued. If Cairo's public schools were so desperately overcrowded, would it have been feasible to reactivate the Elmwood School as an annex rather than sell it off? How well was the auction advertised, who else bid, why did the city decide to auction off Elmwood at a moment so propitious to the founding of Camelot? And were the black 40 percent of the city's residents consulted about the transformation of a building with their tax dollars in the brick and mortar into an all-white school? For that matter, were whites unable to pay Camelot's $300 tuition told that the sale meant that less funds would be available to educate their children in the public schools? These questions go unasked and unanswered.

But the transformation from public schoolhouse to private is a complete one: Elmwood-turned-Camelot does not engage in athletics or any other extra-curricular activity with the public schools of Cairo.

Commissioner Freeman sums up her impression.

"You have here," she says, "A situation of self-perpetuating segregation. It's an all-white student body and all-white parents and all-white board."

Mr. Greaney demurs: "I don't feel so, Mrs. Freeman. Since I have been in the office [of acting headmaster]—and I think if you check that I don't think you will find a black person that I have been other than nice to or cooperative with in the community. I think that my door is open at any time for anybody. . . .

"I will add this: I feel that a black student making application . . . would be somewhat ostracized from his black community for this, because I have had indications—Now no person, no black parents has actually come to me, but I have gotten word back through sources that they would like to enroll their children with us but they fear the backlash that might come from their own community."

They may also fear that a son or daughter might get a teacher who in class compares black children to "a bunch of animals."

How the Kids See it

What do young people, black and white, feel about themselves, their city, the schools and race? One interview outside the hearing may serve as a short prologue to what students say inside. The interview was with Brad Holly, 18, a semi-longhaired, angel-faced but quick-fisted white who has bounced back and forth between the public and the private school.

"We call them 'niggers' to their faces and they call us 'honkeys'," he tells me. "There's perfect understanding."

Holly came to Cairo in 1965 and experienced integration in the junior high school. According to him, it was a far cry from Andy Hardy's Schooldays.

"The blacks thought we were stereotyping them," he says, "And we thought they were doing it to us. You'd walk down the halls, not saying anything, and someone would come up and hit you. Junior high school was the worst two years of school anyone could go through. Fist-fightin' all the time. I did my share. But by high school, black and whites were settling down."

Holly went to Camelot in the eighth grade and he did not like it. He is filled with racial ambivelance and his Camelot complaints are schoolboy stuff, not sociological protests: the coaches were short-hair fanatics, there were no home football games because other teams wouldn't come to Camelot to play, students had to sprint three blocks at lunchtime to line up at a cafeteria their school lacked. He recounts instances of racist remarks from his Camelot teachers but complains that after transferring back to Cairo High School he found coaches favoring black athletes over whites.

"There's no real problems there now," he says. "But there's no real togetherness either. Oh, there's plenty of stuff goin' on in parked cars. But you gotta watch the cops because they tell the parents if they catch a white guy and a black chick together . . . If I had a party, though, I wouldn't want a bunch of blacks because of what people would say. You'd never see another date with their daughters or run around with their son. The parents here are real paranoid."

Talking to Holly, you have no real sense of which way he will go. In Cairo, "real paranoid" parents have helped to produce "perfect understanding" in

their children. Brad Holly has heard a Camelot teacher refer to "black sons of bitches," and the memory stays with him. But "nigger" slips easily off his tongue, contradictions war inside him. And the testimony of children at the hearing also is contradictory. Camelot students Shelley McKee and Pat Sams, and Rhonda Jenkins, a black girl from Cairo High School have been conditioned by their young lifetimes to see and feel differently. Miss McKee has a pert brunette prettiness and Mr. Sams is clean-cut, athletic, forthright. They have been studying in a school which Rev. Potts says emphasizes ". . . religion and moral values. We also encourage our teachers to stress the American heritage, which in turn leads them to a better understanding of the threat of Communism." Miss Jenkins, a wispy girl who wants to study art, has lived in Pyramid Courts during the days it came under sniper fire.

Young Sams offers his view of what is troubling Cairo: "Well, what the beef is, seems to be about now, is just that—is just jobs. When everybody is working, everybody is making money, everybody is happy. When you don't have money and you're not working, you get displeased. You try and change things."

Keynes or Marx might be hard-pressed to put the economic facts of life more succinctly. The girls, however, have sharply contrasting opinions on what race and education are all about in Cairo. Miss McKee thinks that blacks are "welcome to come [to Camelot] if they want to." Miss Jenkins says that if "a black student went to Camelot, I don't think they would really feel welcome."

The white girl is pleased with her private school: "The teachers help me more. We can have more private studies and the classes are smaller. And the atmosphere. We have a nice atmosphere."

The black girl says of public high school: "The way of teaching is bad, and a lot of things in the school need to be improved. Like the books. The books are not up to date. And the material. Just everything. Everything in the school is bad."

Are there racial problems among students "I don't think there's as much as there used to be," Miss Mc Kee replies. "I think there were a few years ago, but I think things are calming down a lot and I don't think it's the trouble that we had . . . I have a lot of black friends and I have been to Cairo High's ballgames and I have cheered for Cairo High ballgames, and I wouldn't refuse to talk to anybody just because they were black."

"The black and white students get along at Cairo fine until 3:30 comes," says Miss Jenkins. "That's when the parents come to school to pick up the children and then there's no contact between the students because they're afraid of the parents and they are afraid of the principal, Mr. Verble, because he hates to see blacks and whites together."

And Miss Mc Kee says that to improve conditions the "only thing I could think would be employment and like the housing. If they can make that better, where some of them wouldn't have to live in rundown houses and they could just—Like a Federal program to build houses where everybody could be more equal."

Camelot, the IRS and Wonderland

An area where everybody is supposed to be more-or-less equal is tax exemptions, and the hearing next focuses on it. On July 10th, 1970, IRS issued a national ruling that private schools practicing discrimination could no longer be given exempt status. Edward Trainor, Regional Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the Midwest Region, is asked whether IRS has verified Camelot's non-discriminatory claim. "We have had no complaints," Mr. Trainor replies. "There is nothing in our file to indicate we received any indication that they haven't performed in conformity with our policy."

Commissioner Mitchell produces the letter of complaint which had been sent to IRS in Washington. The letter says in part: "We believe that the continuation of Camelot's tax exempt status . . . is unlawful" because racial segregation is the prevailing pilicy. Mr. Trainor says he has never seen the letter but he is sure "it would cause us to re-evaluate the file and see what the situation was."

Dr. Osborne, of the U.S. Office of Education, is asked about granting tax exemption to a school like Camelot that is not accredited by the state. "Well,"

he replies, "I think that there is no question in my mind as an educator, as a professional educator, that the IRS has very little business granting any educational institution a tax exemption prior to checking with the chief state school officer and his office on the accreditation of that institution."

Dr. Michael Bakalis, Illinois state superintendent of schools, offers his opinion: "I would agree with Dr. Osborne in general," he says, "Except for some peculiarities which we have at least in the state of Illinois in regard to recognition of private schools. We are not required by law to offer any kind of recognition to any private institution, any private elementary or secondary school . . . in this state. I think in my personal opinion this is an unfortunate situation at present but it is the situation that exists right now.

"But my position philosophically is certainly that we have the ability I believe in my office to make determinations as to whether a school is based on any kind of discriminatory policy, and I certainly would not be in favor of granting any kind of tax exemptions to a school that would be classified in that category."

What Dr. Bakalis is trying to say, as he later makes clear, is that "philosophically" he feels that IRS should have checked accreditation with him. His assistant, Michael Stramaglia, adds that there are 1140 public school districts in Illinois plus innumerable private and parochial schools so his limited staff cannot check on each one and all new private and paraochial accreditations have been deferred. Dr. Osborne says flatly: "The issue . . . is that the IRS is issuing tax exemptions without applying basic criteria."

IRS man Trainor adds a final few words: "Well, I could just clarify first of all policy for the Internal Revenue Service has to be set for all 50 states of this nation, and I think this is an example right here of some of the problems that we run into when we try to establish a criteria that can be applied across every state, because we have a variety of state laws. Now, I'm sure the IRS—and I think it has taken the position here in its announced policy—we would be more than happy to work with this Commission if they have suggestions as to ways we could arrange this. As I stated, very frankly, I am not an educator and this area of law is very technical, and I'd be happy to cover the tax aspects of this. However, the details of the accreditation, of course, I think present a real problem, and I am sure that we have taken this position and would continue to take it that if you have suggestions as to how we can improve our procedures here we would be more than happy to cooperate with this Commission."

The "clarification" disposes of the subject although re-reading the transcript one speculative questions nags: What would everyone concerned have done if the United Front had opened a school for black children and applied for tax exempt status?

Public School Losses

The hearing learns how the public schools have paid for Camelot's successful establishment. Daily public school attendance which had gradually dropped from 1,977 in 1965–66 to 1,632 in 1968–69 suddenly plummeted to 1,182 in 1969–70, the year Camelot was founded. Cairo's School Superintendent, Gene A. Mason, is asked about Camelot's effect on the system: "Well, it's simply decreased our average daily attendance [ADA] which has decreased our state aid. Of course, we don't have that [same] number of students which we have to hire teachers for, but it has hurt us in our student population which we received financial assistance for from the state."

One wonders anew why the school system sold one of its buildings to further a plan (to establish Camelot*) guaranteed to hurt the system. Beyond*

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*Official ambivelance prevailed. **NY Times**, Sept. 18, 1969: "When the school held a fund-raising and "grand opening" picnic earlier this month, it was attended by William Egan, a city commissioner who has since become Cairo's acting mayor, and Elmer Winkler, another city commissioner.

"Camelot now has 15 teachers, most of them drawn from Cairo's public schools. Robert Simpson, president of the Cairo School Board, said the drain of both teachers and white students probably has hurt the school system somewhat but he declined to criticize Camelot's organizers.

" 'If I were a parent with young children in this town, I don't know what I'd do,' Mr. Simpson said."

that deal, statistics tell a broad story of race and public education in Cairo. Despite the city's continually eroding population and attendant financial woes, Cairo ran its schools without deficit financing i.e., borrowing from the state to get through one year in anticipation of repaying the next—through 1966–67. In 1966, the Federal government found Cairo's schools in violation of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The city moved to comply without a court fight—and to assure that vital HEW funds would not be cut off. It adopted the "Princeton Plan" of desegregation, generally accepted as a workable plan. The Princeton Plan calls for the "pairing" of formerly white and black schools, with younger children (both black and white) going to one and older pupils to the other.

But from that point on, deficit financing became the educational way of life in Cairo, averaging about a quarter of a million each school year (Needless to say, this phenomenon of public funds running out as blacks came in was not peculiar to Cairo, Illinois). Although financing details are complex, and it is not always clear whether certain negative actions or non-actions were provoked by integration or were deliberate attempts to cripple integration, one thing is apparent: Cairo's schools have approached the point of bankruptcy at the moment when integration, for the first time in history, is a reality.

Dr. Osborne says: "I'm suggesting if you look at the history of it, Cairo has never been in a strong position to support their schools, and there is no reason to support them now because look where—If you looked at your socioeconomic structure of where your kids [come from] who are gone to the Camelot school, there's less reason today to support the public school than there ever was.

"If you ask me . . . if you walk down the streets of Cairo there are a lot of people that maintain that the only thing that is going to bring this district into focus is to let them go bankrupt and then shock treatment will do it. But that's a pretty big gamble, sir, you know."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "That's letting children go bankrupt, isn't it?"

DR. OSBORNE: "That's right . . ."

Title IV in Cairo

Other witnesses report that for the last three years running, all first-year teachers have been automatically fired to cut expenditures that would result from tenure. The cost in teacher morale, in student confidence, in classroom continuity is never calculated. With dollars so badly needed, it's curious that certain financial help is rejected. Van Ewing*, a black member of the school board and also active in housing, describes the brief history of Title IV in Cairo. Title IV is one of many Federal programs that are supposed to shore up sagging local civic structures. In this case, it is designed to assist desegregating school districts in accordance with community desires. Federal-city negotiations to obtain a grant at one point got underway, according to Ewing, but without the broad community participation required by law.

"Too frequently here in Cairo," he says, "Many, many programs have been brought in and only the officials have decided whether or not the programs were coming in . . . So we . . . felt that since this was one of the basic guidelines that we did indeed want to make sure that through some equitable means we would make sure that community people, teachers, students and, of course, administrators and parents would be involved in the planning and the implementation of the program."

There were two results of demands for community participation, Ewing testifies. One was black-white cooperation. "For once, at least on this program, you know, we were beginning to plan something together . . . rather than something being planned and saying, you know, 'This is what it is.' "

The second result was a white counterattack against the Title IV interracial coalition. The John Birch Society rose up, its position supported by many officials. Although Ewing estimates that 95 percent of teachers in three schools were for the plan, 18 teachers at Cairo High School voted against it, following the lead of their principal, Leo Verble.

*Van Ewing, a brother of Preston Ewing, had owned an appliance store in Cairo that was burned three times during the height of the violence and was eventually forced out of business.

Dr. Osborne tells the Commission: "We spent more manhours in Cairo, my staff, on Title IV work than in any city in six states . . . We can bring in an advisory specialist to the Board of Education to advise them on problems incident to desegregation, and one of the things they can advise the superintendent on was once the white (families) ran, what do you do with your tax base? And we were going to get R.L. Johns and Kern Alexander which are two of the best finance men in the U.S. And the board turned it down.

"But I'm here to tell you, to testify today, that I don't know what happened . . . there were 150 people over here to a meeting and they all voted that they wanted this program, and they all got involved. [But] I've got a sneaking suspicion somewhere up in this power structure that people will say—tell you one thing and they turn right around and do another one . . . I was kind of irked about this because I spent 90 days, I talked to every board member, and everybody says, 'You're going to open old wounds.' Hell, maybe old wounds have never been looked at correctly."

". . . many people," testifies Ewing, "saw this as another avenue where another Federal agency was going to pump money into Cairo and dictate to the citizens of the school community how to run their programs . . . [so it] was killed by the Board of Education."

The Commission does wonder—given Cairo's penchant for rejecting Federal money—whether the Board of Education now would accept Washington dollars accompanied by non-discriminatory guidelines, even if they were available. "I think that the board now maybe has kind of changed its feelings and would accept Federal money," school superintendent Mason says.

Thus Title IV joined the list of aid rejected over the years by impoverished Cairo—Youth Corps, Job Training, Police-Community Relations, low-income housing . . . Cairo schools did avail themselves of a Title I remedial education program under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Although, this legislation was designed to enrich education for poor children, black and white, there have been repeated reports of misuse by school systems of billions in Title I funds.*

Title I in Cairo

There was urgent need for Title I in Cairo since numerous students read—and still are reading—four to five years below their grade level. Testimony develops that 900 of Cairo's 1,100 students are eligible for Title I, a figure that makes its own morbid comment on what it's like to go to school poor in the world's richest country. The vast majority of Cairo's eligibles are black. But Ewing testifies that "in the Title I [district] office there are approximately five employees with the janitor in the building and the janitor is the only black employee." He says that in a school system 70 percent black, 95 percent of the Title I payroll for certified personnel goes to whites. This means that the ratio of black teachers to black students—particularly important in remedial reading programs—is far out of any natural proportion.

A former white teacher of remedial reading who is a member of the NAACP—Ralph Anderson—tells of one instance where Title I funds were spent without anyone's reading being remedied. "For two weeks," he says, "a Title I teacher aide was used daily as an assistant in a non-Title I class . . . and he was used quite often as a substitute in regular classes, thus negating to a large degree his possible teaching effectiveness as a Title I teacher aide. The students constantly complained of his absence. Nonetheless, at the end of each week he was required to initial a Title I time block . . . certifying that he had

*In September, 1972, a confidential HEW internal report said that school districts were widely misusing Title I money. The Nixon Administration, championing Title I compensatory education as an integration alternative, had promised funds would not be diverted. HEW found, for example, that Chicago had reported 42 schools out of compliance but its auditors discovered the true figure was 126. The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, studied 80 districts and found 79 out of compliance. HEW spokesman Mrs. Jeanne Park conceeded the abuses but said the situation should be under control within a year. Source—NY Times, Sept. 12, 13, 1970.

AP, on Dec, 14, 1969, reported Title I money used in Cairo to pay rent on a school district administrative building.

indeed worked as a Title I teacher aide.

"When I complained about this to the school administrator I was told that, 'Mr. Anderson, you're the only teacher I know who would risk his job to see that the law is obeyed. We can always find a way to get rid of you."

Mr. Anderson, who had been chosen by community people to write proposals for Title IV, was eventually fired by the board.* He testifies that school officials had questioned him about his membership in NAACP and that he was told by an administrator: ". . . it would be important that I not be a member of any organization that is a part of the conflict in Cairo."

Before finishing his testimony, he describes an incident involving School Superintendent Mason. "During a meeting of the executive committee of the Cairo Junior High School Student Council," Mr. Anderson says, "I was present when Mr. Mason—who was then principal of the Junior HS—told James Wilson, the president of the Student Council and also the president of the youth chapter of the Cairo NAACP, to take off the "Black Solidarity' button which he was wearing. He actually didn't wait for James to comply. He removed the button from him in the presence of the other members of the executive committee . . . [even] if [Mason] felt that the button was offensive, I think that he had no right to pull the button off."

When a rational approach to race is too long deferred, the irrational occurs and suddenly a button becomes important enough to merit the consideration of an arm of government like the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Mason defends himself: "I asked this student to take off the button because I felt that it might stimulate a fight maybe between a black and white student. And he didn't take it off . . . or he did take it off for a time but he put the button back on. And I asked him to take it off. And he did take it off. But I did not snatch the button off . . ."

Button, button, who had the button? The question at once is ludicrous and meaningful as a small symbol of a large issue in a nation whose paper policy of equality ultimately fails or prevails according to what men like Ewing, Mason and Anderson make of it. Mason admits that Title I teachers *were* used as regular substitutes "because we had no students for the Title I teachers at the beginning of the school."

Schools in Bankruptcy

Dr. Grace Duff, in her 17th year as the elected Superintendent of the Alexander County Education Service Region, presents a long and detailed account of how Cairo's educational structure has crumbled to the point where the public was unaware that bankruptcy lay just around the corner and the school board was firing new teachers, then filling the vacancies with no long-range plan for paying them, and all the while failing to inform the public of the fiscal chaos.

She comes to this melancholy conclusion: "The thing that disturbs me greatly as an educator is that we have this feeling in our community that we will just run full blast as we are until we just close our doors and then we will let the state take us over. That's frightening to me—that we do not have the will, the will power, the strength, nor are we willing to accept our responsibility as administrators and as

*Interviewed outside the hearing, Anderson says his dismissal letter arrived the same week the Commission came to Cairo. It charged six reasons including "not going through proper administrative channels with complaints . . . unprofessional discussion of teachers and administration which cause dissention [sic] among teachers [and] inability to properly relate to junior high school students." There were 210 students at the JHS. Three passed around a petition in his behalf which was signed by 120 of 130 students approached. Lawyer Holland barred the petition from his contract hearing.

Anderson concedes differences of opinion between himself and school authorities on many racial issues related to his belief that student concerns were secondary to budgetary needs in seeking Title I funds. According to Anderson, these differences emerged in the summer of 1970 when he was initially interviewed for a job by then-assistant principal Leo Verble. Anderson says that Verble's first question was, "suppose a big burly black stud grabs you and calls you a mother ..... son-of-a-bitch, what would you do?" Anderson says he replied, "I'd say, 'Have I done something to you? What's the matter?' "

Anderson's wife, another Cairo teacher, was also dropped by the school board.

board members to do the things we know we should do in education and . . . get our house in order."

Commissioner Mitchell then observes, "If I were moving an industry around the country and looking for a promising place to put it, I'd be horrified at a place that had a busted school system, that was limping along on flat wheels and had no real future and hadn't resolved its basic community relations problems and was looking for even worse [ones]."

With 65 percent of public school tax referenda being rejected in Illinois and similarly high rejection rates in other states, and with schools like Camelot springing up everywhere in a climate increasingly favorable to giving public aid to private schools, Commissioner Mitchell says to Dr. Osborne:

"One of the things we run into when we come to a place like this is that when we talk to state and national officials they tend to say, 'Well you know, we can't tell people what do to. We have broad programs and they are available.' . . . Yet the facts of life, the civil rights facts of life, if you want to call education a civil right—which this Commission feels it is—is that unless—If a community wishes to turn down Federal funds and stop its bond referendums from ever being successful and therefore turn off its funds, if the community, the voting community, chooses to degrade the quality of its school system, it appears to have a right to do so.

"Now that's sort of like seceding from the educational assumptions of the United States. How does the Federal government view that kind of a possibility "

The reply of Dr. Osborne, a Federal education expert, made no headlines but few conclusions reached that day by any American official on any subject contain such potential "future shock." He says: "What is going to happen is that within 10 years, if communities such as Cairo continue not to seek funds where funds are, you are going to get a national curriculum. Because we are not going to allow about 10 more years down the road for children to be subjected to damn foolishness . . . You have got Mickey Mouse power structures running between administrative levels, between one principal and another principal, between one superintendent and another superintendent, and as long as this chicanery and foolishness continues what is going to happen is you are going to get a national curriculum."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "What you're saying to me is another 10 years of this and the Federal government is going to take over—"

DR. OSBORNE: "They have to."

If a Federal takeover should come to pass, it would be one more example of Washington intervention in an area formally allocated to states' rights. This would further diminish the revered constitutional compact insuring citizens local control over certain institutions of education, commerce and government rather than ceding it to a distant and bureaucratic authority. It would be a substantial, perhaps a fatal, blow to democracy. But unfortunately, the American experience has shown that the original democratic compact (conceived in a time of slavery, flawed from its conception, cursed by the flaw) has systematically excluded some citizens from the rights privileges and responsibilities of local control, whether it involves a seat in a classroom or a lunchroom, a place in a voting booth or in a factory. So an awful American irony plays out: those citizens most dedicated to individual liberty under the Constitution must advance the surrender of local control to the kind of central apparatus that inevitably curtails the fullest democratic expression envisioned by our Constitution-makers. Racism lays a heavy lash on the body politic in Cairo and a thousand other cities.

Whether or not Dr. Osborne's prediction comes true is academic to the students who testify at the hearing. Cairo has already done its worst to them and their one-word answers to a single question say more about their city than many pages of adult testimony. Each is asked: "Do you plan to stay in Cairo after you graduate?"

MISS MC KEE: "No".

MISS JENKINS: "No".

MR. SAMS: "No".

The hearing continues after they testify, but their verdict is already in.

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SOME PAINFUL REALITIES

"I will follow that system of regimen which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of my patients, and abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous ....."

Hippocratic oath taken by medical men for 2000 years

Question: "Does the dentist take an oath similar to that of a physician?"

Dr. Kobler: "Yes, ma'm."

Question: "Would you subscribe to that oath if you had to repeat it today?"

Dr. Kobler: "If I had to I would say, Yes."

Question: "Dr. Gillespie, do you subscribe to the Hippocratic oath?"

Dr. Gillespie: "Well, **yes.**"

Testimony of white Cairo dentists who do not take black patients. CRC hearing, March, 1972.

Witness Russell Deberry tells a story which, up to a point, is painfully familiar to all of us. It begins with an aching tooth, the kind of ache you first treat yourself with a drugstore nostrum, hoping the pain will go away. This is what Deberry did. But some pain does not go away.

"Over that night it swole," he says. "And my whole face, you know, like I had headaches and my eyes got so they started hurting from the toothache. The next morning I started calling dentists in Cairo to see if I could get an appointment. So I called two or three of them. They said, 'Okay, you have to notify us within a 5-day limit before you can get an appointment.' "

Who hasn't experienced difficulty in getting a dental or medical appointment? But there was an element in Deberry's case that not everyone faces. He is black and, as he tells the hearing: "There's no black dentist in Cairo and (white dentists) don't want to wait on you." So, seeking relief from a toothache, Deberry must deal with another painful reality.

"I kept laying and I kept laying and I said maybe if I go in and they see how much pain I'm in and

how I'm swole up, you know, [and] that I do have money—because it's a question with some of the dentists. So I have heard from some of the blacks that's been to them . . .

"The receptionist told me—this was on the phone—'Well, the office is full. You didn't make an appointment. And the doctor is all tied up for the day. But if you could come in within five days, you know, if you could hold off just for five days, then we can wait on you.'

"So, you know, I set there and I said, Five days! I'm almost dead today. So I said, I know, I'll go down. So I went down to the dentist's office, walked in and the receptionist was watching TV in the little hallway. The doctor was sitting at his desk with the door half closed. Nobody else was in the office. The chair was empty.

". . . I didn't tell her I was the one that called. I just says, 'I've got a toothache. My face is swollen. I'd like to get the tooth pulled.'

"She said, 'Oh, I'm sorry, sir, we don't do extractions, you know. We only work on dental plates. But I can recommend you to a black doctor in Cape Girardeau, Missouri,' which is some 30 miles away, you know.'

"So I say, 'You know, I need it pulled now. I don't have transportation to get over to Missouri.

"She said, 'Well, he's open until 5:30.'

"Now, it was 4:20 or something then . . . and 30 miles away and I've got to locate a car . . . So she wrote the number of the dentist down. She assured me that he was a black dentist, good dentist, no appointment needed. I says, 'Okay.'

"She says, 'Let me give you another number.' She gave me one in East Praire, Missouri, which is some 40 miles away . . . She says' If this one don't take you or if you miss them by getting over there late, then go to East Praire. I think he stays open till 6 o'clock.'

"So I was turned down and my teeth weren't pulled. I had to go 40 miles to do that."

A receptionist is called to testify, not the one who directed Deberry to cross the Mississippi River for dental help. Mrs. Jean Vasser, black, is a receptionist at St. Mary's Clinic in Cairo. The clinic, operated by the Sisters of the Holy Cross since the Civil War, does not have a dentist. "I myself have been unable to get an appointment in Cairo," Mrs. Vassar says. She crosses the Ohio River to Paducah, Kentucky, when her teeth hurt.

Two Cavities in Dental Service

The two Cairo dentists who next testify are the only full-time dentists in the city *or* the county, and they serve a two-county area with a population of 22,000. Dr. Emmett Gillespie is in his seventies, a crusty and short-spoken man who practiced in Cairo for 43 years. Dr. William M. Kobler, in his early 40's, bought his Cairo practice in 1957.

Dr. Gillespie at first estimates that he treats "one or two" black patients a week and then under questioning reduces the number to "possibly four or five in the last three months." He says that after practicing dentistry for four decades in a community 40 percent black that he has no regular black patients and he explains it this way: "After 43 years of practice you have your own following where you are taking care of say three generations of one family. You build up to a pretty steady practice, and it's all I can do is take care of these under the present conditions. It's all I'm physically able to handle."

COUNSEL POWELL: "When a black comes to you in need of dental care and in need of prolonged dental care, what reaction do you have "

DR. GILLESPIE: "I refer him to Dr. Friend."

It develops that Dr. Friend is a dentist who comes to town ½ day each week. There is another dentist in Mounds, 12 miles away. He is in his 80's. Dr. Gillespie says that aside from his generational practice, he "occasionally" take on new patients.

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Do they occasionally become full-time patients of yours?"

DR. GILLESPIE: "Not necessarily."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Do they occasionally become full-time patients of yours?"

DR. GILLESPIE: "Possibly".

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Yet, although you do occasionally take on new full-time patients, none of these people whom you take are blacks. Is that correct?"

DR. GILLESPIE: "That's correct."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "How do you decide who to treat and who not to treat, Dr. Gillespie?"

DR. GILLESPIE: "Well, that's my own privilege."

The dentist, who is an official of the Tri-County Health Department supported with state and local funds, is asked whether he would regularly treat a black patient who needs prosthetic work which he says he performs.

DR. GILLESPIE: "I don't say I would."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "I didn't hear you."

DR. GILLESPIE: "I don't say I would and I don't say I wouldn't."

He does say that he does not participate in Medicaid or Medicare programs although he did take public aid patients until 7 or 8 years ago. He denies that he stopped taking them because of any official request not to discriminate but that it was simply "too much of a load."

Dr. Kobler testifies that he too has no full-time black patients and that he has treated *no* black patient in the last six months. He says that he bought a well-established practice and consequently takes few new patients, and all of them on referrals.

"I do obtain some new patients," he explains, "And like I say, I ask them who sent them and that way I usually obtain a good patient."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "What would you call—"

DR. KOBLER: "Which is sound business practice."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "What is a good patient?"

DR. KOBLER: "One who pays."

He follows this refreshingly frank answer with the information that he sometimes takes on new patients *without* a referral but none of these is ever black. Then to the question, "Have you ever refused to treat a patient because of his race?" Dr. Kobler answers, "No." He has never participated in Medicaid and he says both he and Dr. Gillespie ". . . were removed from the public aid rolls at the same time, and the reason was our patient load was so great that we couldn't treat all the public aid patients and consequently the state came to us and they said, 'Well, if you can't take them all, don't take any.' "

Commissioner Freeman tries to learn if there was more to it. ". . . Is it not possible that the welfare rolls were saying that if ten patients are sent to you that you will treat them without regard to race, creed or color, and that you refused to participate in the program because you do not accept this requirement . . . would you treat them without regard to race, creed or color?"

And Dr. Kobler replies, "If my schedule permitted that. I mean, if my work schedule was such that I could take care of them, yes, ma'm."

Commissioner Mitchell, citing "one of the great Christian imperatives—that no man shall suffer if we can do anything as individuals and certainly as professional to prevent it," says: "Now, what we're hearing here that's most important it seems to me out of everything else is that there are only two dentists. They are overloaded. You have your own eccentricities about the choice of patients and I won't comment on that . . . But have you ever engaged in conversations, discussions, done any planning, thinking about the provision of adequate dental care to many people in the community who don't appear to have adequate dental care?"

W.C. Spomer, a lawyer who has accompanied the dentists, introduces a letter which has fortuituously arrived just in time for the hearing. It was written a week earlier to Dr. Gillespie by the Comprehensive State Health Planning Agency in Gov. Ogilvie's office. The letter says ". . . it appears that Alexander and Pulaski counties have acute need for additional physician, dentist and professional nurse manpower. We can implement this in these two counties through assignments from the National Health Service Corporation. In your position as a practicing dentist, we need to know if you concur with the assessment of need, and we solicit your active participation in the project."

The state's display of awareness of Cairo's "acute need" is entered in the record and Commissioner Mitchell asks Dr. Gillespie's response to the letter. "Okayed it," the dentist says. "Accepted it. Glad to have it."

What will come of the letter is uncertain. But Drs. Kobler and Gillespie reiterate how hard it is to get young dentists to come to Cairo, a "depressed area with fees not what they are in larger cities." Dr.

Gillespie says that if his son were a dentist he wouldn't want him to practice in Cairo because of the "way things are now, our school situation and all." But he says he has corresponded with dental schools trying, to no avail, to get black dentists to come to the city.

"I also corresponded with Dr. Wallace who was a black dentist in Cairo for a number of years," Dr. Gillespie says. "And he made his nest egg and he moved to Chicago. And he became quite well known in Chicago through the dental associations and the political end of dentistry. And his picture appeared in our dental journal a number of times at different meetings . . . And he said he regretted it but he said it was just impossible to get these young men to come down to a small community like Cairo, and I can appreciate what they do. Just like Dr. Wallace . . . Our colored dentists will come in and stay for a number of years. They will make a nest egg and then they want to go to a larger community."

How a "depressed area" with low fees produces dental nest eggs is not quite clear but Dr. Gillespie is not questioned further. However, the Commission Staff Director, John Buggs, has a final question for Dr. Kobler. Perhaps because Mr. Buggs is black and has paid for a toothache or so in his time, he remains curious about Dr. Kobler's referral system. The dentist agrees that one of his criteria in accepting referrals is the ability to pay the bill.

Director Buggs says to him: "In Alexander County, as you may know, all of the black people are not poor. I have some statistics here that indicate that there are at least 15 families with incomes up to $9000, at least 38 families with incomes up to $10,000 and at least 41 black families with incomes over $10,000 a year . . . In terms of the fact that you say your fees are not as high as in other places . . . they would find it possible to pay.

"If one of those persons came up and presented his last income tax return to you indicating what his income was and indicated that he was willing to pay you cash—without a referral—would you take him?"

"Yes sir," replies the doctor.

Medical Care in Cairo

St. Mary's Hospital is the only hospital in Cairo, the only one in Alexander County. It serves a three county area. Since January, 1971, it has operated the only clinic* in the area where poor people, black and white, can bring their medical problems to all of the area's six doctors who practice there. In its first 13 months of operation, nearly 2000 patients used the clinic, their number divided equally between the races. Some had never seen a doctor before in their lives, others had tried to see doctors but had lacked the money or the half dozen overworked doctors in the county had lacked the time to see them.

"Our doctors here are so overloaded," receptionist Vasser testifies, "They're out day and night, and then emergencies come up and if you're sick and sitting in [their] office, they can be out at the hospital doing something else. Here . . . you have a doctor at all

*The State Department of Public Health schedules clinics at set intervals and there is a mobile dental clinic that visits schools from time to time. But these services are only intermittently available. If a person is sick on Monday it is small comfort to know the state clinic will be open come Friday.

times during clinic hours, and any emergency that comes in you can bring them right into the clinic and know that a doctor is there. So the clinic is a very important place . . . and I think it would hurt a lot of people if we don't have a clinic. If there's no clinic here, then a lot of people are going to go uncared for. A lot are going uncared for as it is."

St. Mary's Clinic is not merely an auxiliary medical service for thousands of men, women and children. It is the only place they can count on for help when pain strikes or fear of disease comes and will not go away. Beyond any statistics on the number of patients treated or the costs involved, St. Mary's Clinic means that a father with a sick child and an empty pocket can do more than curse his inadequacy and despair over what his poverty is doing to a loved son or daughter. The clinic is both a first and last resort of hope.

St. Mary's and the OEO

But St. Mary's Clinic, which has existed during its short lifetime on funds from the Office of Economic Opportunity, is going to lose that support and may have to close.

Why? . . . The story of St. Mary's is told by hospital officials and Federal functionaries. Sister Joan Marie is the Administrator and Sister Gladys Marie Associate Administrator and clinic coordinator.

"I originally came here to close the hospital," Sister Joan Marie testifies. "Because of the insurmountable difficulties. I think the primary one was financial . . . if we, you know, weren't a large religious community with eight other hospitals, we could never have sustained ourselves in Cairo." She adds that in the last fiscal year, bad debts alone amounted to $53,000.

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "Well, business is very good in bad debts, I see."

SISTER JOAN: "That's right. But, you know, our situation is that, basically, we could not walk away from this hospital."

From her arrival three years ago, she faced other problems. The hospital advisory board was "laying down ultimatums which they expected me to accept. Mostly, it dealt with our community relations and with our involvement with two priests who were here at the time who were associated with the United Front."

COUNSEL POWELL: "What was the problem concerning the United Front?"

SISTER JOAN: "Well, our chaplain was a member . . . and was one of the leaders, and the board demanded of me that we cease this relationship and that we no longer permit members of the United Front to come to the hospital or to be involved in any religious services and this type of thing."

COUNSEL: "Did the demands made by the advisory board . . . relate to treatment of patients, who would be treated at the hospital and who would not be treated "

SISTER JOAN: "No, it did not . . ."

The hospital board was temporarily disbanded and the sisters moved on to the problem of patient care. Before the clinic was established, the St. Mary's emergency room provided out-patient treatment. But doctors were leaving the staff, according to Sister Joan, because "they could no longer meet the demands of the emergency room service which are extreme. That was one of our primary reasons for opening the clinic."

Application was made to OEO to fund a clinic and an outreach program to seek out those ill and uncared for. After a community bi-racial clinic advisory board was established, a one-year $100,000 grant was received. The sick quickly found their way to St. Mary's.

"Some of the people who come who have never seen a doctor have not been ill before," explains Sister Gladys Marie. "Or they have not known how to go about it. And they hear about the clinic and know they can walk in and have a cup of coffee, and it's a little easier for them to come."

"[But] I feel that the medical services are grossly inadequate," Sister Joan adds. "I believe that we are —only—we're still . . . well, we're still just putting out fires. I feel that our disease prevention level is very low and was lower before we opened the clinic

. . . there is a great deal more that needs to be done."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "Is there a city commissioner or councilman or whatever who is assigned to health?"

SISTER JOAN: "There is. I have no relationship with him."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "Ever meet him at all?"

SISTER JOAN: "No sir."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "What you're saying is that this city's program for health care essentially emanates from the hospital itself and does not come from the Council and you are not aware of interaction with the city in health planning?"

SISTER JOAN: "Well, to be perfectly frank with you—"

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "You have to be. You're under oath." (Laughter)

SISTER JOAN: "I know. I don't see anyone initiating any long-range plans. I feel that the community . . . there's a great element of mistrust here which I'm sure you are aware of. I feel that people here by and large are not willing to risk . . . we are not willing to take a chance. We are not willing to make mistakes . . . and I can't live this way. We can't live

this way at the hospital. We have taken chances. We have been right out on the limb. And I think this is the way we must operate."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "By nature and training, you have learned to take risks on the future of the human race, haven't you?"

SISTER JOAN: "That's right."

Despite the risks and disappointments, Sister Gladys can say: "You know, the last two days of hearings it's been such a negative thing. Not being a native of Cairo but only here a short time, I see many positive things, and I hope that the Commission finds these also."

The next place the Commission looks, however, offers no optimism. Daniel Larsen, supervisor of the OEO's Illinois Regional Office, tells the hearing: "We have no capability at this point to re-fund the clinic."

It isn't that OEO—which Commissioner Mitchell praises for speeding the original grant with a minimum of red tape—is disappointed in its investment. "I think the reason it was originally funded," Larsen says, "was because our office felt that there was a desperate need for this kind of health facility. And we continue to think that that need exists . . . I think that given the resources that they have available to them, we feel that they are doing an excellent job of operating the health program."

But there is no re-funding "capability." Larsen says that OEO has been in touch with HEW to see if it has money available for St. Mary's. Gerald Bennett, assistant to HEW's Regional Director in Chicago, and Roy Armstrong, HEW acting Director of Comprehensive Health Planning, are called to see what they can do to keep the doors open in a place where the poor and sick can bring their ills, sip a cup of coffee, feel a doctor cares about them. HEW, in the last fiscal year, put $7,169,000 into Alexander County. Some $2,751,000 went for old age and survivors benefits, $321,000 for disability insurance, $847,000 for Medicare, and hundreds of thousands more for Title I, welfare and rehabilitation services.

It does not look like there will be anything for St. Mary's clinic. "I think that is worth knowing," Armstrong says, "Because I think it would be unwise to create an expectation here . . . that HEW is now standing in the wings with available resources to subsidize the clinic, because that in fact is not true . . . There is great uncertainty as to whether or not it would ever be funded by HEW."

Chances are that someone poor in Alexander County who needs to see a doctor has never heard of section 314 (e) of Public Law 89-749. This law allows HEW to make direct grants-in-aid to things like clinics, but only out of a specifically allocated sum of money. The difficulty, Armstrong explains, is that the grant-in-aid program is now six years old and most of its fund has been spent. In addition, he can think of at least 25 competing requests from other communities with similar problems. "Certainly we know the need in Cairo is gross for all kinds of services," he says. ". . . It's unquestionable in terms of need for service. But it's also true in many other communities. So again it's a matter of availability of funds . . ."

One of the competing requests is from Red Wing, Minnesota. Commissioner Freeman asks, "What is the black population of the Minnesota rural area you are talking about?"

"The problems in Minnesota, ma'am, are Indians," he replies.

So the HEW logic or sense of priority seems to say that for impoverished Indians in Red Wing to receive medical services, their black and white counterparts in Cairo must be denied. The HEW budget request before Congress asks for increases in all categories except two: section 314 (e) and (d) which covers Federal subsidies to states for health services. Congress in 1972 would fund the largest Defense Department budget in history. Direct Vietnam war costs that year ran to $134,000,000 a week. If that cost had been diverted to HEW, Red Wing and Cairo could end their competition. Two hundred clinics could be funded at $100,000 each for the price of one day's combat. These comparative figures may speak for themselves, or they may say different things to different people. But in a nation where inadequate health care is common in many Cairos, the figures merit national consideration, national judgment and national response.

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THE HOUSES OF CAIRO

MRS. GESTA DEBERRY: *"Well, we filed an application shortly after we were married which is over two years at the Court housing project ..... I talked to the office lady. She'd tell me, 'No, we don't have any vacancies, keep in touch now.' So in the end after I found out they weren't planning to give me a house and having stood me up so long ..... I said, 'Well, if you don't have anything at the Court maybe you have a house at Elmwood.' Within the next three or four days I had a number that I could move in whenever I got the money."*

QUESTION: *"What kind of project is Elmwood?"*

MRS. DEBERRY: *"That's an all-white project."*

QUESTION: *"And the Courts?"*

MRS. DEBERRY: *"That's an all-colored project."*

QUESTION: *"And you got a house at the Courts when you threatened to make an application for Elmwood?"*

MRS. DEBERRY: *"I got one in four days."*

Testimony before the Ill. State Advisory Committee—June 10, 1966.

MRS. GENEVA WHITFIELD: *"..... there's many people who are in need of shelter and the only place where there is adequate housing would be Pyramid Courts because it's an evident fact that they will never be allowed to move into Elmwood Project which is all-white.*

"I was living in a 4-room house with 14 in the family. The kitchen floor had fell in. There was a sheet of tin over the floor. The table was sitting on top of the sheet to keep the cats and dogs from coming up through the floor. And still there was nothing available in Pyramid Courts for me. . . . I was 7 years getting the apartment I have now. The only way I did get it is when I said, 'Since you're going to stand me off for Pyramid Courts, then how about giving me a house in Elmwood?' And you know, in no time this house was available for me."

Testimony before Civil Rights Commission—March, 1972.

Two witnesses, testifying six years apart, tell the same story of persistent, unlawful discrimination in Cairo public housing. In 1966, the responsible state and Federal authorities might have pleaded ignorance of Cairo's contempt for the law of the land and the plea have been accepted; civil rights housing law was relatively new and Cairo had long existed in antediluvian limbo. Six years later, with a body of testimony like Mrs. Deberry's on the record, with Cairo's racial discord and its roots reported in the Springfield, Chicago and Washington newspapers, what is the official explanation of why black Americans in a city where wretched minority housing abounds cannot enter a project built and supported by national tax dollars?

James S. Johnson has been Executive Director of the Alexander County Housing Authority, which runs the projects, since it was established in 1939. He serves by appointment of the County Board of Commissioners whose overlapping membership with the board of Camelot School has been noted. Johnson testifies that Pyramid Courts with 237 tenants is all black and Elmwood with 159 is all white and both always have been so. He goes back more than 30 years to explain that when the projects were built by the old U.S. Housing Authority ". . . we were directed—in fact, forced—to place our projects in segregated areas. I don't mean in segregated areas as such. I mean in areas of white and areas of black—which amounts to the same thing, of course . . . So historically those two projects have been segregated."

Johnson recalls that in 1966 or 1967, HUD issued guidelines forbidding segregated public housing. "It was about this time that racial tension built up in Cairo," he says. "The city became so polarized that it has been impractical at this time to desegregate these two projects to the extent that you would consider satisfactory."

Since there has been no desegregation, satisfactory or otherwise, he is asked whether now he should implement the guidelines by assigning blacks to the all-white project and vice versa.

MR. JOHNSON: "As I stated before, if it would be possible with all safety, I could agree. But as I have said, the tensions and polarizations and the problems, the very severe racial problems that have developed, have made it impractical in my estimation."

Since the appropriate law does not mention Johnson's "estimation" as a criteria for integrated housing, his reply is more revealing than relevant. Even if it did, it is just possible that the "severe racial problems" might be one effect of segregated housing rather than a reason to continue it.

GENERAL COUNSEL: "We have heard testimony that housing conditions in this community are very poor and that people are very poor . . . And we also have information that the housing projects . . . are better than the housing which exists in the private sector. Are you telling me a white tenant that you would assign to a black project which has an adequate apartment wouldn't take that apartment? Have you ever tried to make such an assignment?"

MR. JOHNSON: "Yes. I have never had a white tenant that would offer to go to Pyramid Courts, no."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Have you ever tried to make such an assignment?"

MR. JOHNSON: "Yes sir, I have."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Consistent with the requirements of HUD, wouldn't it be proper for you in a case where a white tenant refused assignment at a black housing project to deny that person assignment in public housing?"

MR. JOHNSON: "Yes, it would be."

GENERAL COUNSEL: ". . . I suggest to you that in assigning these people to projects without taking into account HUD criteria, you're not complying with Federal requirements. Do you have a comment on that?"

MR. JOHNSON: "No sir."

There is no clear-cut indication of whether Johnson is influenced in his "estimation" by the white political powers of Alexander County at whose pleasure he serves. He says at one point it was "our feeling" that desegregation was impractical and Commissioner Freeman pursues this assertion.

COMMISSONER FREEMAN: "That is your feeling. And my question to you is whether this feeling on your part, which is in violation of the law, is known to the Federal agency or has been brought to

the attention of the Federal agency as an explanation"—

MR. JOHNSON: "Yes."

COMMISSIONER FREEMAN: "—for why you have not complied with the law."

MR. JOHNSON: "Yes, Mrs. Freeman, I am quite sure that the Federal agency is aware of it."

Commissioner Freeman tries to find the name of the Federal officials involved. Johnson replies ". . . there have been a number of discussions about the integration of the two projects, none on a formal basis and none in writing, I'm sorry to say. And I could not definitely, honestly, give you the name of any one person, Mrs. Freeman." Staff Director Buggs presses the issue.

STAFF DIRECTOR: ". . . the Federal government publishes at least on a yearly and I think on a semi-annual basis the racial characteristics of all the public housing projects in the United States. The assumption is, of course, that they get that information on forms that are submitted by local housing authorities. Have you ever submitted such a form?"

MR. JOHNSON: ". . . it's submitted at the end of each quarter."

STAFF DIRECTOR: "Has anyone from the Department of Housing and Urban Development ever raised any question with you about the social composition of any of the projects based upon your submission of information?"

MR. JOHNSON: "Based upon the submission of the occupancy report? No sir, they have not."

But apparently some curiosity has developed over badly-needed repairs at Elmwood Courts and Pyramid Courts. They are the only alternatives to shack-living for many persons, black and white, and even this housing is coming apart at the seams. Mrs. Geneva Whitfield, a black housewife, tells of conditions at the Courts: "The houses need paint. And the roaches, the rats, and the cracked ceilings, cracked walls, bad plumbing and bad screen. And whenever there is a screen repair, the tenant has to pay for the repairs."

Another black Courts' resident, Mrs. Bernadine Peairs, has also been inside Elmwood Courts—as a babysitter. The Housing Authority, she says, cleans up Elmwood on the outside where "out at Pyramid Courts they don't do anything." But Mrs. Peairs says that inside Elmwood things are only "a little better." Johnson says a "very, very extensive" remodeling program will start when HUD comes across with the money. He says that within the last two months HUD officials and he have been discussing repairs, and that the guidelines include "integration of the two projects."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "Integration is a part of the guidelines and if you remodel you will have to deal some way with those requirements?"

MR. JOHNSON: "Most assuredly, yes, sir."

In Search of Responsibility

Time will tell about the future. The Commission tries to track down past and present responsibility for continuous Federal law violation. It is a trail through a bureaucratic labyrinth similar to many encountered in other hearings where a high tolerance among public officials for broken civil rights law is everywhere in evidence. Jerry Sternstein, from the Office of Housing and Buildings in the Illinois Department of Local Government Affairs, is asked why more isn't being done to provide housing in Cairo. Mr. Sternstein replies that Cairo is "approaching the 15 percent mark on subsidized housing under the public housing program" and he is "not sure the answer lies in building more public housing units." He thinks that the private market or state-sponsored moderate income programs are the answer. "I'm saying I don't think you'd want to have a community that had 75 percent public housing," he says. Well, no one has suggested 75 percent and his attitude raised an immediate question:

GENERAL COUNSEL: ". . . if you have 15 percent publicly subsidized housing in a community in which there are 30 percent of the people below the poverty line, don't you think there ought to be housing sufficient to meet the needs of these people and within their cost?"

MR. STERNSTEIN: "I certainly do."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Then figures don't mean anything unless you look at the needs, do they? Isn't it the responsibility of your office to look at the needs?

And when you speak of figures shouldn't you speak of those figures in terms of the needs within this county?"

Sternstein replies he would "never advocate, you know, not looking at the total needs situation." But he feels there will be no more applications for public housing until the modernization program goes through. All right. The Commission next would like to know what the state is doing about discriminatory housing in Alexander County, the perpetuation of an all-white Housing Authority and staff.

MR. STERNSTEIN: "If we were asked to make a management survey of the Housing Authority, we would then give—we can informally—of course, you know, I can tell them if they ask me what I think. But I have no power."

. . .

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "You have nothing to say about the approval of commissioners of Local Housing Authorities?"

MR. STERNSTEIN: "We do approve—We don't make appointments. The appointments to the boards are made by the Chairman of the County Board of Supervisors. We approve his appointments or their appointments."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "Suppose you don't approve them?"

MR. STERNSTEIN: "Suppose we don't approve?"

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "Has there ever been a case where you didn't?"

MR. STERNSTEIN: "Yes."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "Why wouldn't you?"

MR. STERNSTEIN: "Well, what we could do is we don't approve in instances where we can verify that an appointment is anti-public housing. In other words, if a man is put on a board with the express purpose of thwarting the public housing program, we simply don't approve the selection."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "Given a commissioner who segregates the public housing under his authority so that black people live in one kind of public housing and whites in another, does that concern you at all?"

MR. STERNSTEIN: "Yes."

But he explains that since 1970 "when we began to look at this problem," there hadn't been any appointments so "at this stage of the game we are in what I like to call a checkmate position." It sounds more like a draw that maintains the status quo. The game, at any rate, began 33 years earlier when the Housing Authority was established in 1939. Public disclosure of illegal segregation had been made years earlier in 1966 before the Illinois State Advisory Committee. Commissioner Freeman asks whether the next move might be for Mr. Sternstein's office to "consider" telling the Authority it will withhold approval of all appointments until a black is named

MR. STERNSTEIN: "I think, you know, the question of could we consider it—We could always consider it. But from reading the state law—"

COMMISSIONER FREEMAN: "Could you give an opinion as to—"

MR. STERNSTEIN: "I think we would be on very shaky legal ground."

Commissioner Freeman then examines the legal requirements for occupancy of the state's public housing. The law says: "The authority shall require that occupancy of all housing financed or otherwise assisted under this Act be open to all persons regardless of race, national origin, religion or creed . . ."

COMMISSIONER FREEMAN: "Is your office responsible for the implementation of this provision in any way whatsoever?"

MR. STERNSTEIN: "No. I believe—with reference to a Federal program HUD is—We allow HUD to enforce that."

DIRECTOR BUGGS: "Suppose HUD doesn't?"

MR. STERNSTEIN: "Then I would try to."

The Buck Doesn't Stop Here

With the buck passed to Federal agencies, the Commission calls John Waner, Area Director for Illinois, HUD, and Irving Horwitz, HUD Regional Opportunities Adviser charged with investigating compliance with various civil rights laws. Waner is asked whether he or his office was aware of public housing segregation in Cairo. "*It hasn't been brought out in the record to date*," he replies (italics added). He says he became aware of the "acute situation

primarily through the press." But Waner believes that there are "some positive steps that are being discussed to bring about an improvement in the situation that has been long overdue." "It's a slow process," he adds, "Because the climate of the community has not been conducive to any immediate changes . . ."

Once again, civil rights law enforcement appears whimsical rather than absolute, at the mercy of community climate. One wonders if a community's climate were hostile to the draft, would Federal officials stop drafting there? If they did, would the Justice Department neglect to prosecute? The Commission turns to Horwitz, the civil rights enforcement officer. He has been with HUD for nine years. But he is quick to point out that the Office of Equal Opportunity did not come into existence until 1968 and anyway, he says, the Justice Department has power to bring suits without HUD doing anything. And then, his office has only 16 staff personnel to service six states.

Commissioner Mitchell's exasperation shows: ". . . what you hear as you sit here," he tells Horwitz, ". . . is that you know there's segregated housing in this city. And you know it's going to stay segregated on the basis of any present plans or principles or power that seems to be brought into play. You know that the taxpayers of the State of Illinois and the United States of America through their governments have said there should not be segregated housing.

"And you bring in people who represent all those institutions, and it says everywhere in fine print that there can't be any segregated housing, and then when you ask anybody they're too busy or they just got here last August or there's something. But you never seem to be able to pin down how to resolve the problem."

Horwitz responds by describing the efforts of the interagency Federal task force to deal with Cairo's problems "which unfortunately are not peculiar to Cairo. They may be more extreme in Cairo than elsewhere," he continues. "But [if] Cairo was seen, you know, as maybe an opportunity I think that maybe for one of those rare times in our history that Federal agencies could put together a total package of programs and goodies and whatnot to help alleviate the problem. But one of the things that we run into—and maybe I'm pleading, you know—what can I say?—mea culpa —is that rightly or wrongly we live in a kind of political system whereby Federal assistance and I hear (also?) from the state is dependent upon the community's capacity first of all to request that assistance and go through all the legal and financial rituals that they go under . . ."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "Well, you're not saying to me that the Bill of Rights depends on neighborhood consent?"

MR. HORWITZ: "No, but the solution of problems I think does depend upon consent."

Waner explains that HUD cannot use the "carrot-and-stick" method of withholding funds from Cairo and Alexander County because today the local officials do not apply for any program funding. But Staff Director Buggs counters that Presidential orders forbidding Federal funds in discriminatory programs go back to 1962 and he points out that HUD has the legal power to take over a local housing authority if Federal regulations are not being obeyed. Wilbur Tuggle, one of Waner's aides, concedes that it *could* but "given the reality of staffing" it would be impossible. And Horwitz concludes: "I can only state that the Federal establishment as I know it cannot bring about significant change in places like Cairo until and unless there is a mechanism by which there is almost total control of the local environment. I don't frankly perceive that happening too soon."

It is the second time at the hearing (the first during testimony on education) that the prospect of Federal assumption of traditional local powers is raised. It is an indication of the frustration felt by some public and private citizens who wonder what it will take to make something, anything positive, happen in the Cairos of America. Few in Cairo, for example, be they black militant or white supremacist, will deny that housing needs are both basic and critical. So it would seem that Cairo officials would welcome plans to bring better housing to both races at no cost to the city. So it would seem . . .

A Private Start

Van Ewing returns to testify in his role as Executive Director of the United Cairo Community Non-Profit Housing Development Corporation. It is a biracial group formed in 1969 when Governor Ogilvie announced his $5 million program to build 250 apartments. Ewing says that the Governor recognized a "tremendous need" for housing improvement and said "he was making available to this area or could make available to this area $290,000 as seed money toward the development of low and moderate income families."

Considering the time and place, all went remarkably well—for a while. The Illinois Housing Development Authority gave an initial $40,000 administrative grant and a housing survey was conducted that found half of the city's units unsound or dilapidated. Ewing says the Corporation decided to build a $2 million multi-family development under the FHA 236 program with rents ranging from $90 to $125.* A Federal rent supplement program was included.

"At $90," Ewing testifies, "We did not have an awful lot of people, you know, who felt that they could pay $90. But with the rent supplement program, those who would not have been able to afford it [could]. We would be able to get them out of the shacks and put them in decent housing and hopefully the structures that they would move out of would be demolished, and then at a later date we could develop additional housing on those particular sites."

With a 100-unit goal, the Corporation needed about 15 acres, the cheaper the better so that most of the money could go into the "brick and mortar" costs. Because Cairo is squeezed in between two rivers, there is not much sound open land available that is suited to project construction. But there was one area of 240 lots that years before had been designated for urban renewal. Like so many things in Cairo, renewal never got started. But the city owned 84 of the lots, and the Corporation wanted them.

COMMISSIONER FREEMAN: "Did this $2 million cost contemplate that you would have gotten the land free from the city?"

MR. EWING: "No, we weren't asking for it free . . . we were asking them to sell us the property and we had a dollar amount."

Then-Mayor Pete Thomas went along with the plan for a while, and a council ordinance approving the sale and the rent supplement program was adopted May 10, 1971. That night, Pyramid Courts came under sniper fire. Verbal attacks followed in the council, Ewing says, with charges that the United Front would control the project. He tried to explain that "this indeed was not public housing, that we were not talking about housing that a particular group would control. We were talking about housing that would be assessed at the same tax rate that all other citizens in the community would be assessed at.

"We were speaking of the kind of housing that could begin or at least provide the initial thrust towards a rebuilding, you know, of the community and towards providing housing for all of the people in the community of Cairo . . . not just, you know, for black people."

And a Public Stop

But new elections were coming along and race, however disguised, would be the one issue. In a city that had short-changed its public education by selling two school buildings to Camelot, the council voted to table the ordinance to sell the lots and create new housing.

COMMISSIONER FREEMAN: "Has the ordinance ever been brought up again?"

MR. EWING: "No, it hasn't."

COMMISSIONER FREEMAN: "Is (the rent supplement resolution) in effect now?"

MR. EWING: "No. Several months ago this resolu-

*Welfare had long been paying rents of $70-$80 for shacks, many with outside water and toilet facilities.

*In a later interview, Ewing says he sought cooperation from ex-Chamber of Commerce President, Gen. Bolen. He says Bolen agreed, then called a meeting of all white housing contractors, pointedly not inviting a contractor who had built the last two houses constructed in Cairo. He was black. Ewing's Corporation has received additional financial help from the Illinois Housing Development Authority and through the Farmers Home Administration has built one house with 13 more approved. But these are home-ownership middle income dwellings in the $15,000-$18,000 range which do nothing to relieve the substandard living conditions of Cairo's black and white poor.

tion was rescinded by the present City Council."*

One of the present council members is Allen E. Moss, a former White Hat leader and now commissioner of public health and safety. He testifies why he opposed the housing program.

MR. MOSS: "There was a lot of local opposition because they felt like the program—it was a 235 or 236 program, I'm not clear on that. My memory doesn't serve me that exact. But there was a lot of opposition because it hadn't worked anyplace else. And I still think it's fashionable nowadays to do what the taxpayers and the people who elected you want you to do."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Now you mentioned the taxpayers. Among the taxpayers in this city are a number of people, some of whom are black, some of whom are white, who are in need of housing. Don't you, as a member of the City Council, have an obligation to meet the needs of those people?"

MR. MOSS: "Oh, I have an obligation, and we had a City Housing Board, sir. We also have a County Housing Board. And these groups had both been working on the housing problem. We didn't feel like we should duplicate that service."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "What, if any, steps is the City Council taking to provide low-income housing for people in the city?"

MR. MOSS: "As far as I know, there are no immediate steps or nothing that's being pushed but the city does have a Housing Board that is trying to get funded."

Although Mr. Moss testifies that he is responsible for the "complete operation of the [city] legal department," the hearing finds it difficult to obtain precise information about the status of the 84 lots. He has "no idea" how long they have been considered for urban renewal. Asked if the land has been declared a blighted area, he replies, "I'm sure it has, but I couldn't testify directly to that."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "Is there a building code?"

MR. MOSS: "There must be, sir. As I explained when I first sat down at this table, I do not make that my specialty. I'll be glad to research the subject if you'd like a complete detail on it."

STAFF DIRECTOR: "Mr. Moss, you testified earlier that the basis for your opposition to the 235–236 program was because it didn't work any place. Am I correct?"

MR. MOSS: "That's right, sir."

STAFF DIRECTOR: "Could you tell me where you got that information?"

MR. MOSS: "There was a lot of adverse publicity. I think one of the major networks done an hour special on it. Some of the areas was in Detroit and some on the East Coast, and the West Coast. It just didn't work."

STAFF DIRECTOR: "Mr. Moss, the 235–236 program is the most successful program HUD has ever had."

MR. MOSS: "Well, I'm not a housing expert, sir. Maybe it is. But the literature I have read was adverse to it."*

Staff Director Buggs tries to clarify the point that the Housing Development Corporation plan rejected by the City Council was not for public housing, and he asks why Mr. Moss complained about it as a public official and voted against it.

MR. MOSS: "No, I didn't complain. I just voiced a vote the way the people that complained to me wanted me to vote, and that's the way I voted."

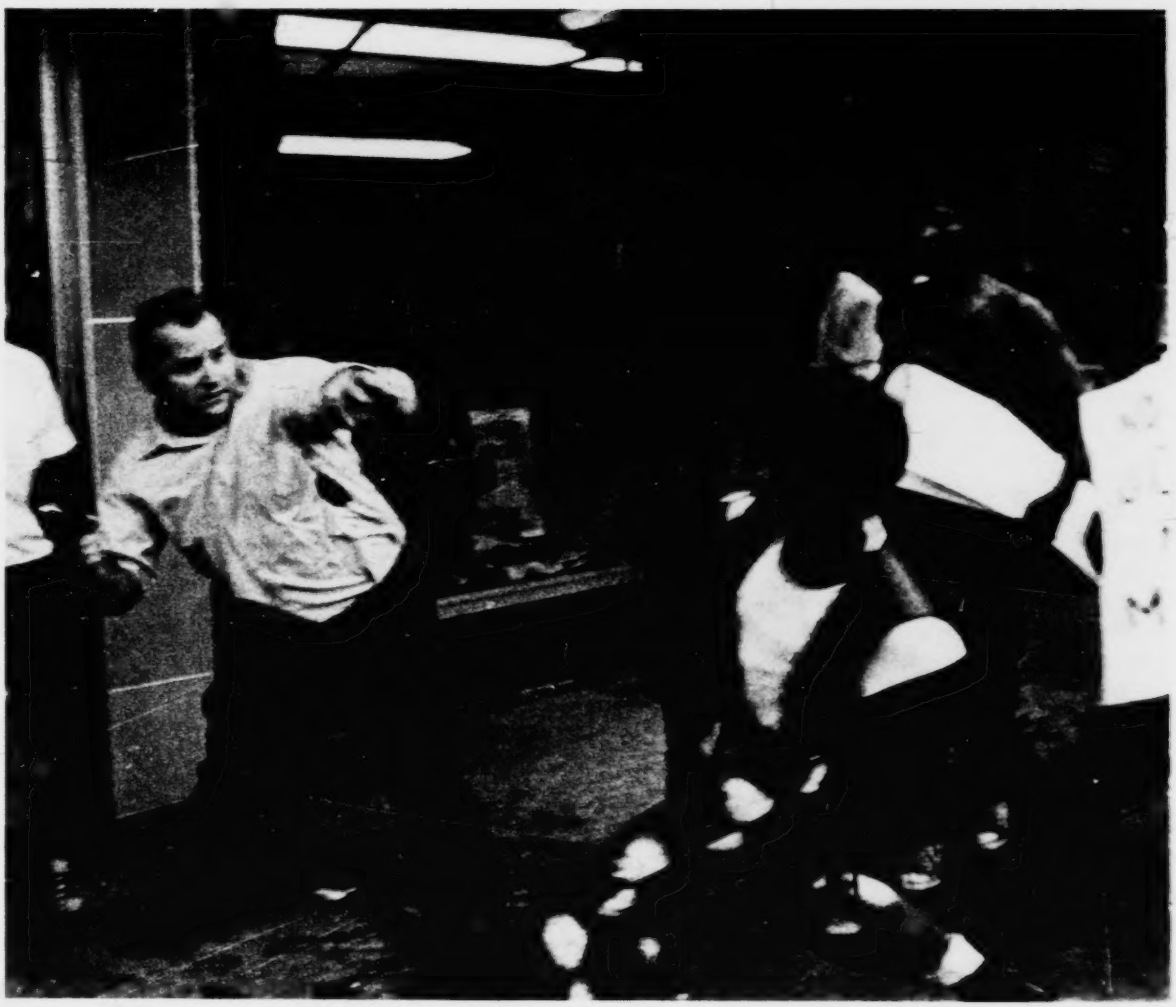
. . .

STAFF DIRECTOR: "But if it were a private enterprise building private housing without local public funds, would you oppose it?"

MR. MOSS: "Yes, if this project was explained and all of the details ironed out and everybody was informed—and as you say it was with private money and they were taxpayers—they'd have the same right to complain to me because I didn't vote for it. And I would vote for it if people convinced me it was a good thing. It doesn't matter what I think."

STAFF DIRECTOR: "I don't really think we are communicating. If a private body comes to the City

*Later in the hearing, attorney Holland offers in evidence a **Fortune** magazine article, which he says is "the specific article that was referred to in city councilman Moss' testimony covering city council votes up to the middle of 1971 against subsidized housing." The article, entitled, "Housing Subsidies are a Grand Delusion," was published in February 1972.



Council and asks to buy property that the City Council owns for the purpose of constructing on that property housing which is not public housing and which the citizens of Cairo will not be taxed to support, do you then as a public official have to take a position that housing should not be built?"

MR. MOSS: "Oh, I don't take that position until I hear all the facts, sir."

The hearing does not get all the facts on what it takes to put a decent roof over the heads of poor people in Cairo. But it learns enough to understand why the building up of the city never begins, why the shooting up never ends.

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". . IF WE COULD WORK TOGETHER"

"We are plagued with the three U's—unemployment, underemployment and unemployables ..... There might not be conflict in Cairo if Negroes could have, as many whites do, a good job, a home, a car, and a chance to go on vacation sometime, like I do."

Martin Brown, former editor of the Cairo Citizen forced out of town by white militants. AP—Feb. 16, 1970.

"A proposed Federal program designed to train and upgrade city employees ran into trouble from all sides at a public hearing in Cairo City Hall ..... Some termed the program 'just another Federal dole to appease the black community.' ..... However, black spokesmen were equally apprehensive about the program."

The Cairo Citizen—July 13, 1971.

The most bitter and complex racial battles are waged in the field of employment. Bitter because jobs are basic to life and people fight hard when their livelihoods are at stake. Complex because, even in homogeneous societies unaffected by racism, the mechanism joining job to worker must mesh together so many variable factors—the worker's relative skills compared to his competition, the judgements, preferences or "pull" involved in the hiring process, the economic conditions exerting their ultimate pressures. When the unacknowledged factor of racism is added, it demoralizes blacks and makes hypocrites of whites who deny it.

A black man and a white apply for the same job or seek the same promotion, and the black habitually loses out. Is it racism? White says it is a matter of qualification. Black says the only qualification that matters is skin. Companies refuse to settle in an area that seems fertile for industrial growth. Is racial turmoil fomented by black militants the reason, or white intransigence to change? And whatever the reason, when there are not enough jobs to go around, how should a community even hypothetically committed to redressing past racial wrongs go

about apportioning the few jobs that are there?

Employment Figures

Cairo is long on such questions, short on answers. The overall statistical story told by the latest census in numerical outline makes glum reading. Total county unemployment stood at 8.3 percent with black unemployment at 16.2 compared with a 6.5 white rate. The number of persons employed in county industries dropped 25 percent in the decade of 1960–70, a thousand jobs in all disappearing. Of the jobs remaining in 1970, white collar jobs accounted for 35% of the white males and 10% of the black males, 49% of the white females and 35% of the black females. Blue collar jobs were held by 45% of the white males and 61% of the black males, 17% of the white females and 15% of the black females. No white males and 1% of the black males held household service jobs; 2% of the white females and 15% of the black females held such jobs. The figures on the underemployed are anybody's guess.

An Overview: Private and Public

John Bleveans, Chief Counsel of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, who has been quoted earlier, gives some "overviews" on racial hiring. Many of the largest area industries are Federal contractors or subcontractors who legally are supposed to comply with nondiscrimination pledges or lose contracts.

"For some reason, you know, the part of the contract that says 'make the product and this is how you will make it,' and all those things, all those contract provisions are very important and everybody knows what they are. But when it gets down to that bit about affirmative action or [that] you won't discriminate against blacks, that seems to be an appendage which nobody seems to care about. And without the enforcement and without the threat of a contract rescission based on non-compliance with a nondiscrimination clause, who is going to do it? I mean, you know, they don't do it unless they have to."*

GENERAL COUNSEL: "You would suggest then a fruitful line of investigation for the Commission might be an examination of the frequency with which compliance investigations take place in this area?"

MR. BLEVEANS: "Yes, and I assume that you'd be met with the same thing you have been met with before—that they don't have the staff. They can't handle it. They can handle other things but this is something they can't handle."*

He adds that "in all fairness I would say that there have been two new businesses that have come to Cairo or come to this area in the last year—one is just north of town, a printing operation—and they may grow to be like a 100-employee business, and at the present time I believe that their work force reflects the racial composition of this county. I have also had some assurances from a shipyard that is going to open or re-open at Mound City that they will attempt to do somewhat the same thing. They are the bright lights as far as I am concerned . . . otherwise it's a pretty much all white proposition."

If the private sector generally feels a sense of responsibility only to its owners and stockholders in the pursuit of profit, public employment—in theory at least—should be responsible and responsive to the people it serves. What is the practice in Cairo?

" . . . without exception," Bleavean says, "When you walk into a public office in this city and county, you are met with the whiteness of it. For instance, the Alexander County Courthouse, I don't suppose

*Bleveans is talking about Cairo in particular but his conclusions could apply nationally. Nowhere in the country has a Federal contract ever been cancelled for racial discrimination. Since there are more than 100,000 contractors and subcontractors doing government business, this indicates either that there is no continuing job bias in the United States or that the government is an accessory to violations of its own law.

*Other agencies also suffer from staffing inadequate to do the job. The Food and Drug Administration, for example, has only about 200 inspectors to cover 60,000 food processors. Since adequate staffing is directly dependent upon Congressional funding, a comparison of Congressional budget priorities is interesting. In 1971, the House Appropriations Committee cut 20 percent from funds requested by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission charged with enforcing anti-bias laws. At the same time, it granted another law enforcement agency—the FBI—its full budget request including $30,000 to buy a new armored limousine for its director.

there are more than three blacks in the whole courthouse. You can go up and down the halls of the various county offices that are there, the state attorney's office (Ed. note: where White Hat leader Peyton Berbling held sway)—I'll just go down the hall with you now—the state attorney's office, the treasurer's office, the assessor's office, the sheriff's office, the county clerk's office. [Then] come around to the circuit clerk's office, go out the back door to the Highway Department, stop off at the two courtrooms and you won't see, you know, enough black faces to remember."

"Go into the City Hall . . . and you get the same thing. I don't believe there are any black people employed in the City Hall . . . I have had occasion to know through one lawsuit* the employment situation in one of the larger public employers that provides gas and light to the city [the Public Utilities Commission (PUC)] . . . They had 25 employees, all of whom were white."

At the same time, 40 percent of the customers paying light and gas bills were black.

Rejection of a Federal Program

With blacks and whites both hurting from unemployment in Cairo, you would think that a program to produce jobs without draining local funds would be welcome. So you would think. But in 1971, a Labor Department grant for $137,000, under a program called "Public Service Careers", designed to train and upgrade city employees, was rejected. Some blacks and whites both opposed the program and the rejection had the appearance of community schizophrenia bordering on a municipal suicide wish. Certainly it was hard for Shelley Mc Kee to understand. Miss Mc Kee, the white schoolgirl who testified about education, had this poignant observation about the impediments in the way of Cairo kids who might want to return to town after educations were completed instead of becoming another exodus statistic.

"We (could) come back and build Cairo up to what we want it to be. Then we would be the grown-ups running it and we could have our own ideas . . . But like the program from the government that was supposed to come here for jobs—I think it was career planning or something—and it was voted out. I think that was a big mistake because we need that, because so many kids are trying to find part-time jobs and they can't do it. And a lot of kids would be happier and it might settle things if we could work together, and through these programs it might help a lot."

To learn what killed the Careers Program, it's first necessary to understand how it was born, and the Byzantine account of the life-and-death of one minor program illuminates the major obstacles to progress in Cairo.

In 1970, with the continuing United Front boycott hurting merchants who still refused to hire blacks, segments of the white community headed by moderate Mayor Pete Thomas were making some conciliatory gestures. Thomas, some Council members and Mrs. Sarah Jane Clark of the Shawnee Development Corporation, devised the Careers Program which would have meant about 25 black-white jobs over two years with funding from the Department of Labor.

Detour Ahead

A short detour must be taken at this point to examine the Shawnee Development Corporation (SDC) of which Mrs. Clark, a white lady, was a prominent member. SDC was one of many Community Action Agencies which sprang into being after the OEO was created to sponsor various programs designed to help the poor to help themselves. It became a sponsoring agency operating Labor Depart-

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*The suit charges discrimination against the PUC and the County Housing Authority. One document filed says of the Housing Authority: "At least since Nov. 18, 1959 the Authority has not advertised any job openings in the Authority work force. The Authority has not solicited new employees through the use of union referral services, private employment agencies, newspaper advertisements, or the Illinois State Employment Service . ." The implication is that the all-white Authority dispensed jobs by word-of-mouth, systematically excluding blacks.

The PUC, according to the suit, does not have any educational, height, weight or sight requirement for its employees, all of whom are white.

ment job programs like Operation Mainstream and the Neighborhood Youth Corps and OEO Emergency Food and Medical Programs. By the time many groups like SDC got into action, OEO itself was being nickel-and-dimed to impotence and slowly dismembered by Congress. In 1971, for example, OEO was "pumping" only $38,000 a year into Alexander County (exclusive of the St. Mary's Clinic).

Although under law SDC was supposed to provide broad-based community representation to the poor of five counties, it chose to set up headquarters directly behind the Cairo police station. This was patently hostile territory to many poor people who were black —and not a few who were white. A 1970 OEO evaluation team said that while national publicity about Cairo's race problems was driving away industry, SDC was not doing all it could to make the best of a bad situation. The evaluators found that SDC "has fallen considerably short of achieving the degree of effective participation called for by the Economic Opportunity Act and OEO regulations." For starters, it suggested that SDC relocate someplace not in proximity to the police station—the former black high school building, for example. It called for more youthful, neighborhood participation on the Shawnee board of directors and it condemned the Alexander County Housing Authority for "selection of tenants on a racial basis".

Stung, the SDC fired back that the OEO team had fallen under the spell of the United Front. A story in the *Southern Illinoisan* on May 6, 1970, quoted the SDC board as saying: "Their mention that the Cairo racial problem has attracted nationwide publicity with the resulting derogatory reactions is quite true. Their close cooperation and attention paid to the militant United Front group is responsible, to a degree, for this nationwide distorted public image of Cairo."

Race, it conceded, had "contributed" to industry staying away. But it defended its own white-dominated racial composition. "We wish to state that the people who comprise [our] Neighborhood Advisory Committees are dedicated Christian people, endowed with a desire to help their neighbor and enough common sense to get the job done."

Move away from the police station which some might find inhibiting?
"This has been discussed many times previously and the answer is simply, No."

SDC eventually did relocate but it did not budge from its assertion that the Alexander County Housing Authority "has done since its inception in 1937 an outstanding job within the framework and the funds available to them."

Resume Normal Speed

Now, understanding that Mrs. Clark was a power in SDC, some subsequent events may be more inteiligible. The program that she, the mayor and the Council submitted won Labor Department approval. At the hearing, Mrs. Clark is asked, "Had there been consultation with members of the black community?"

MRS. CLARK: "There had not been consultation with the United Front or those members of the black community."

When the plan was presented at a public hearing in July, 1971, many blacks were apprehensive about buying a pig in a poke. The NAACP's Preston Ewing Jr. questioned whether the poor and minorities would be getting their fair share of jobs. Rev. Koen demanded that half the jobs go to blacks. And the charge was made that Mrs. Clark, one of the program's white architects, was going to get the cushy top administrative post. She denied this at the time.

At the hearing she explains the conflict and the City Council vote one summer's night this way: "I don't think it was a question of racism or racial bias on the part of the Council as much as it was this aura that two groups have that have done verbal battle many times. And that evening it was pretty hot, and there were quite a few sirens running up and down the street to make everybody a little nervous, and the Council simply voted 'no'."

But, as the record shows, it was simply not so simple.

State Activities and Inactions

Neither was the state role in Cairo employment.

Six years earlier, the Illinois Advisory Committee hearing had concluded:

"The Cairo office [of the Illinois State Employment Service] has neglected to push for integration of work forces in local industries which might employ Negro trainees. Specifically, it has avoided referring any Negroes to Dam 53 [Ed. Note: a nearby multimillion dollar Army Corps of Engineers project] for skilled or temporary unskilled jobs over a period of years, even though the Corps of Engineers periodically requested referral on a non-discriminatory basis."

For that matter, the Illinois SES itself had no blacks working in its Cairo office. Nor in the Springfield office of Erwin Althoff, its state director, who told the hearing: "The Illinois SES has been following a policy of strict non-discrimination for many years."

Six years pass and the reputation among many blacks of SES as a job source or of the State of Illinois as an employer has not improved. Frank Hollis, James Whitfield and James Wilson testify. Whitfield and Wilson are on welfare, Hollis is described as an investigator for the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights. Wilson describes his unsuccessful efforts to find a job through SES.

"Well, like every time I go down there they give you a little card to fill out with your name, your address and how many kids you have. And that's it. And then they ask you, 'Well, come in next week and if there's anything, if there's any jobs opening, we'll let you know.' And for several times like I went for a whole month, you know, and it's just a routine thing, like nothing but to go down and check in and check out. No jobs on the bulletin board. No nothing, you know, about the job situation."

One place where the job situation—for some—is always good is out on the highways. In fiscal 1971, Alexander County received $10,754,710 from the Federal Department of Transportation for highway planning and construction. This expenditure repsented nearly *half* of all Federal money coming into the county from a Federal government that cannot afford to fund a $100,000 health clinic. The State of Illinois adds its share to the Federal bundle and administers the various lucrative programs. Strict state and Federal anti-discrimination regulations, of course, are supposed to govern the use of highway funds. But blacks over the decades have complained that highway programs left them standing by the roadside and witness Wilson contributes an updated complaint.

He says that the previous September, a bulletin was issued calling for workers at a nearby road construction firm in Carbondale. Wilson testifies that he and a "carload" of blacks first checked with the State Highway Department and were directed to the contractor. They filled out applications with the contractor and were told they would be called shortly. That was six months earlier.

"So like we haven't heard from him yet," Wilson says, and he continues his story of a runaround on the Alexander County highways.

"We also went back to the Highway Division in Carbondale to apply for a state job and spoke, and they said that there was no openings in the Highway Department but they could direct us to someone who would let us know more about it, which was down here in Cairo, the county clerk. I then took a carload down to the county clerk's office, and we set down and talked with him, and he told me that he wasn't —he didn't know nothing about the State Highway Department as far as hiring and it wasn't none of his business and for me to contact the Governor's aid official to see about that because he didn't have no authority over that. But we was told that he *had* authority over it."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Were you told that political considerations were involved in getting a job with the Highway Department?"

MR. WILSON: "Right. The county clerk told us that to be—in order to get a job on the state highways that it was political—and that you would have to contact someone in the Springfield office before I could get hired."

Wilson and Whitfield, drawing welfare, were determined job seekers. Whitfield says that the county clerk told him that they hadn't hired anyone locally in five years although Whitfield had heard that "they have recently sent five people down to the highway,

you know. So I had to write a letter to one of the Governor's aides. So I drafted up a letter and I had one of the secretaries at the United Front office to type it up and I sent it to one of the Governor's aides. All right. I didn't hear from him. So one day in the office we decided to call somebody up there." Wilson, they testify, called the Deputy Director of the Highway Division. He gave Wilson the number of one of Governor Ogilvie's aides in Chicago. But when they called Chicago, he wasn't there.

"So then we called Springfield," Whitfield says. "He wasn't there. So we left a number for him to call. So he called [Wilson] back, you know and [said] that we would get a letter, you know, in regard to the job as soon as he gets to the Maintenance Department to find out what jobs are available. But we haven't heard from him yet."

These stories admittedly are long and probably tiresome in their homely detail. But how tiresome it must be on welfare and looking for a job and living such stories.

Hollis testifies that in 1967 he did get a state highway job as an engineer's aide. "There was racial tension in Cairo in 1967," he says, "And the Governor made available two jobs, and I was one of the lucky people to get one."

That lasted a year, Hollis recalls, but then an election changed the parties in power and he was out. But during that year he observed the Highway Division office in Carbondale. He says that some 150 jobs inside the office itself were all held by whites. Today, with massive construction underway on Interstate 57 (which will allow traffic to bypass Cairo and compound its present difficulties), Hollis claims that no blacks are employed as engineers. When vacancies do occur, he says, they are never advertised or posted publicly or listed at the SES.

"It takes, you know, racial conflict or something before the blacks know about a job."*

*In August, 1969, one month after 200 United Front supporters were arrested outside Gov. Ogilvie's office, he authorized the hiring of 20 to 25 jobless Cairo residents to work on highway maintenance crews. The Governor's directive said in part: "The unemployment situation, particularly among blacks, is critical in Cairo." **Springfield Journal,** Aug. 13, 1969.

In the Private Sector

Each of the three men, at one time or another, has worked at the Burkart-Randall Co. It is a division of Textron Industries that makes polyurethane foam padding; Burkart's is also the leading local industry, hiring eight percent of all employed Cairo residents. The plant has been in Cairo for as long as most people can remember. About fifteen years ago, it shut down with devastating economic results, and did not re-open until six years ago. Blacks have depended on the plant for jobs even as they charged it with discrimination.

For example, on Oct. 19, 1966, NAACP president Hattie Kendrick reported to the Illinois Advisory Committee: "[Burkart] is hiring Negroes. Workers are nearly 50 percent Negro. As a matter of fact, for a while they seemed a little zealous. It was reported that public aid took some of the recipients to Burkart in vehicles driven by local case workers in the welfare office, and the Negroes were told to stay on the job and not return to the Department of Public Aid should they lose their jobs."

Sixteen months later, eight blacks were charging Burkart with racial discrimination before the Illinois FEPC. Seven claimed they were denied jobs and the eighth complainant said he answered a newspaper ad for a supervisor's job, was hired as a truck driver and then was put to work loading boxcars.

Hollis, Wilson and Whitfield all claim that the company discriminates. Hollis says that he has investigated black worker complaints for the Lawyers' Committee and finds conditions the same as when he worked there three years before. That is, no "black persons in the higher level of salaried, managerial and supervisory positions."

Wilson, who worked at Burkart's as a machine

*The Cairo plant is one of five in the Burkart chain and the new national headquarters. Although Burkart, whose products are used in the home and automotive industry, does not hold Federal contracts, its parent company Textron does. The anti-discrimination clause in Federal contracts with Textron applies to all its subsidiaries. This means that if discrimination existed at Burkart's, Textron contracts could be cancelled. It's a moot point since, as has been noted previously, never in history has a Federal contract been cancelled for job bias anywhere in the country.

operator four years ago, describes his experience. "I left Burkart's because of like during the three years that I was there I was a machine operator, and like I knew the plant pretty well. So like what would happen is that they would bring in a white person to me and, tell me to teach him what I know, and he would become my foreman. So like this went on for the three years I was there, like the foreman would eventually leave and they'd send me another person to teach him what I knew, you know, and he would come to me and be my foreman."

(For Commission veterans of the 1968 USCCR hearing in Montgomery, Alabama, there is a bitter parallel to the testimony then of John Barnes, who had worked at American Can in Bellamy, Alabama, for a quarter of a century. "I learnt," he said, "when they get ready to hire a white they'd bring him to me and want me to learn him, and I stayed in the same category all the time. And this white, he would advance, probably he would go somewhere or go to the office and make a salesman, foreman, probably his salary would go to $500 or $600, and mine remained the same all the time.")

"So I went up in the [Burkart's] personnel office," Wilson continues, "and we had a discussion about it. So they told me that like they had a position for me but they felt that I wasn't quite ready for it. So I say, 'Well, like you know it's been three years. I don't know how long do it take, you understand, for me to be qualified for whatever position you all have for me?' They said that, 'Well, it takes time, you know.' So within that time then I just left."

In 1972, according to Burkart officials, in a plant 32 percent black only two out of 38 foremen are black. Burkart counsel Stephen Shulman testifies that all except two of 26 clerical workers are white. Of 38 officials and managers, 36 are white. But figures show that 36 percent of laborers are black. T.J. Connaughton, Vice President for Operations, says: "We have a balanced work force in the Cairo plant."

Connaughton tells the hearing that "we have decided not to argue about the testimony" of Hollis, Whitfield and Wilson except to point out when they each left Burkart's. "I trust it is apparent," he says, "that these gentlemen are uninformed about the [present] employment situation at Burkart." He goes on to say that three black workers recently rejected offers to become foremen, apparently because they did not want to leave the union bargaining unit. But he points out that 37% of all promotions in general have been going to blacks.

COUNSEL POWELL: "Well, on balance, I think your statement is very commendable . . . Do you have any idea why there are only two black foremen out of 38 in the plant in an area where there is such a large black population?"

MR. CONNAUGHTON: "No. The method of selecting a foreman is done on the basis of qualifications and those two foremen were selected and offered the job and took it. Why there are only two I really couldn't say."

Connaughton, in a prepared statement, had told the Commission that "the unsettled situation in Cairo has proved a distinct disadvantage to us. Existing personnel are reluctant to transfer to, and new personnel are reluctant to undertake, duties in a city torn by dissension."

Commissioner Freeman asks, "What is the involvement, if any, with the community, with the community itself?"

MR. CONNAUGHTON: "For myself personally I have been responsible for this operation for about a year and I frankly—I personally have not got involved. I have been up to my neck trying to straighten out some manufacturing problems. We as a company . . . as far back as 1967 have made numerous attempts to try and bring some Federal agencies or government agencies or people to come to grips with some of the problems. Our division management spoke to the local Chamber of Commerce here back in early 1968 and urged them to conciliate the problems that they had here which were shaping up and obviously going to get worse . . . Some of the testimony that we heard before is indicative of our own frustrations in trying to solve some of these problems."

In 1968, General Bolen was president of the Chamber of Commerce, the same Bolen who replied "Sh—" when a reporter asked him whether blacks should have more say in city affairs. It would be

fascinating to know what the general said to the heads of the Cairo's most vital industry or what the industrialists said to the general. Apparently, whatever was said, the white powers did not feel that what was good for Burkart's was good for Cairo. Or perhaps the conversation was inconclusive, the minds on either side did not meet, the Chamber did not understand that Burkart's was firmly committed to racial equality in Cairo.

There seems to be no such problem today with the Federal government. Connaughton says that the company has been filing contract compliance reports with the Office of Federal Contract Compliance and all is well. However, individual blacks who do not think all is so well have complained to the FEPC in Springfield that job bias persists at Burkart's. John G. Cheeks, FEPC office director in Springfield, does not single out Burkart's or any other company. But he says that during the last four years, his office has made 33 separate trips to Cairo to investigate a total of 84 complaints. And he draws two flat conclusions:

"There is definitely employment discrimination because of race in Cairo and Alexander County.

"Although certain employers and unions have better records than others, the Illinois Commission has no appreciable evidence that racial discrimination in employment in the Cairo-Alexander County area is diminishing."*

Another Private Project

While job bias went its undiminished way, an organization named PADCO was trying to do its own thing about economic conditions. And its brief history in Cairo demonstrates once again what happens when racism so dominates a people that good intentions produce questionable results and progress seems always to be trapped in the starting gate.

*The FEPC, Cheeks says, could do a much better job if it had authority to investigate employment practices and file charges on its own initiative rather than being limited—as it now is—only to responding to individual complaints. Federal agencies are in the same predicament. Job rights law somehow is always weakest at the point it should be most strong.

In an age of acronyms, PADCO stands for Pulaski-Alexander Development Corporation. The two-county group got itself together in 1968 with a board of directors that counted ten whites, two blacks. Working with a few thousand local dollars and amid latent hostility from white elements who equated the start of progress with the end of prerogatives, PADCO originally had little success in attracting new business or rejuvenating the old. But in the spring of 1970, the Federal Economic Development Administration gave it a $40,000 technical assistance grant. Considering the scope of the problems, it wasn't much but it was the first real money PADCO had ever seen and the people were happy. The *Cairo Citizen* of April 23 , 1970, frontpaged the news:

"Recognition of PADCO as the area agency to become recipient of a federal grant for economic development in the two counties greatly enhances the stature of PADCO and raises its level of importance to No. 1 position."

Four months later, almost to the day, a *Citizen* headline read:

"CITY COUNCIL DROPS PADCO SUPPORT"

A hundred people had jammed into the meeting called to consider whether Cairo should honor a $10,000 financial commitment to PADCO. The taint of Washington was on PADCO with all the racial overtones that connoted. Support was voted down, 4-to-1, on the grounds that the city could not afford to help a group seeking to attract new industry. The only supporting vote came from Norman Seavers, Cairo's first and only black councilman, and the tenor of the meeting can be judged by a question asked of Seavers early in the discussion: "Why don't you lead your people downtown and help break the boycott?"

PADCO survived without the Cairo Council's assistance and today is headed by Nolan Jones, director, who has a board of 11 whites and 11 blacks. Jones is a man with natural-born Boosterism who can look at area conditions today and tell the hearing:

"The overall picture I think is encouraging because we have so many tremendous resources to develop on here. Our transportation picture is good.

We are at the apex of the inland waterway system of the United States. We have four major railroads serving the area. We have interstate transportation. We feel that all the ingredients are here for success."

They always have been, of course. But Jones says that now he is getting good cooperation from a host of disparate sources—the Governor's Office of Human Resources, the Illinois Industrial Development Authority, local banks, the EDA. And PADCO itself is working "extremely hard."

"To give an example," he says, "In our last quarterly progress report we reported we had participated in some 153 face-to-face meetings in three months. Twenty of these were with industrial prospects, 18 with small business loan conferences, six speeches to service clubs and civic organizations."

And what has been accomplished over two years in light of PADCO's avowed purposes described by Jones: "The prime objective of this organization is to improve the economy of the area. The name of the game is really jobs—to find new jobs, to increase the spendable income." Richard Grigsby, his deputy director, begins the answer by saying " . . . we have hopes for an air industrial park . . . an airstrip where the local companies can fly in small planes and park them beside their plants . . . it will be the only industrial park in the United States that will have an airstrip, water, rail and highways."

It certainly is a bold concept in an area where most plants do well to keep their trucks running, much less buy company airplanes. But perhaps real vision is required to see the day when Alexander County will have its own functioning air industrial park. In the meantime, Grigsby says that PADCO was "directly or indirectly" involved in such projects as:

". . . an aquarium in Cairo which has four employees.

"A beauty parlor in Olive Branch, one employee.

"A garage in Cairo, three employees.

"A service station in Mounds, one employee.

"Harvard Lumber Company in Tamms projected 50 jobs but due to the increase in the lumber business they are going to double their staff and have 100 employees."

Grigsby cites the printing company in North Cairo mentioned in the testimony of Lawyers' Committee director Bleveans, and a variety of smaller projects. There is no way of knowing which projects are a direct result of PADCO and which are "indirects." Jones thinks that the total number of jobs produced "will probably project out about 310." It is not clear how many actual jobs there are now and there is no racial breakdown submitted on new employment.

Jones describes one of PADCO's most active and successful undertakings. "I'd like to pay tribute to some agencies that have given us strong support. The Small Business Administration [SBA] has been excellent in giving support in this area. In the 29 loans that we processed with them over a period of little over two years now . . . we have had one rejection. I think this is a good track record."

(But outside the hearing, some blacks who originally backed PADCO do not think it is so good. In fiscal 1971, SBA listed a $592,430 input into Alexander County which it called "Influence of Federal Activities." Rev. Koen of the United Front says that as far as the Front can ascertain, only $20,000 of that nearly $600,000 from SBA went to black businessmen.

("And all the while our boycott was continuing strong downtown," he says, "We saw white stores remodelling, we saw new ones like the aquarium or pet shop open with all white employees, and we couldn't figure out where the money was coming from with the boycott hurting business so bad. Now we think we know. It came from SBA and it undermines the boycott.")

The hearing does not explore this area. But Jones does produce figures—they may be projections—that he says show that $40,000 spent on PADCO last year "repersents a savings in welfare cost of $1 million in this area. It would represent $57,000 in sales tax, $37,000 in real property tax, $140,000 in increased federal income tax, a $35,000 increase in state income tax from the personal income developed out of the projects we have worked on."

God knows, the area needs every dollar it can get. But at the moment when PADCO, whatever its deficiencies, seems to be making some progress, the ne-

mesis that has dogged Cairo since the land bust of 1842 seems in no mood to depart gracefully. PADCO, for reasons not altogether apparent, is in the process of becoming a five county planning group instead of continuing as a two county technical assistance body.

"We are having a little hangup at the present time," Jones says, "in our transition, in that we are funded under technical assistance . . . When we become a planning and economic development district we would come under planning money in their [EDA's] department. They have no planning money. Yet they cannot use technical assistance money for economic development planning."

There is hope that something called the Organization of Regional Councils has received a commitment from Washington that would fund an agency like the revamped PADCO. It would seem that a Federal government that can bail out a giant aircraft company on the grounds that jobs are needed could use the same reasoning to keep PADCO safely afloat. Admittedly, a shop that sells goldfish does little to help the Cairo economy. But a shop that sells nothing does nothing at all.

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PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
I. A Hearing Ends

QUESTION: *"Is it your assumption ..... that these problems will just somehow fade away? Or do you expect them to get worse or better?"*
MAYOR WALDER: *"I guess there's a certain amount of that. Of course, when you're recounting our troubles you don't sound like a Chamber of Commerce meeting. It sounds a good deal like the opposite side. We just console ourselves I guess by looking at other towns that have just as much trouble, just as much housing problem, and we do talk to them and ask them what they are doing, see, and what they can do."*

Mayor James Walder, CRC hearing, March—1972.

"Some days I think there's some hope for the rejuvenation of Cairo. But most days I'm pretty pessimistic. It may be past that point of decline from which it can't resurrect itself. Especially since the white leadership doesn't seem concerned. They may wind up with a kind of caretaker government and a population of two or three thousand just hanging on."

Interview with John Bierveans, Lawyers' Committee director since February, 1971. July—1972.

Conventional liberal wisdom says that all citizens, particularly in a democracy, are responsible for what their governments do, but there are degrees of responsibility. Some participate in an injustice; some actively oppose it; some others are primarily spectators of their own lifetimes.

Over the generations, the majority of white Americans have been partners in racism, either silent or announced. Without this partnership, the national climate would not have allowed certain practices in Cairo to become established in the past and persist into the present, threatening the future. But to say that the offense of racism has been general doesn't relieve certain individuals and institutions from

specific responsibility to deal with it. Officials who are on the scene have legal powers and political means to alter events that are not possessed by ordinary citizens who might agonize over what Cairo has done to its people but who are powerless to influence the course of current history there.

The Civil Rights Commission has heard much evidence of racial inequalities. There is a continuum of white abuse going back to those slaves ferried across the Mississippi to build the earliest settlements. Today at the near end of that continuum, there are officials at all levels who cannot be held accountable for a past they did not create but who are responsible for what is being presently created. With them, the condition of Cairo has nothing to do with vague notions of corporate guilt but everything to do with the discharge of their office under the laws of the city, the county, the State of Illinois and the United States of America. What have they been doing?

The Mayor Speaks

After most of the evidence is in, the Commission hears Cairo Mayor James Walder. He is a middle-aged, middle-American haberdasher, a disarmingly genial man who describes his part-time mayor's job. "I go up to the city hall every morning and answer mail, and then I go down to where I sell shirts for a living. And somebody calls me and tells me there is a dead cat in the street. And I tell them that's not my business but I have to talk to them for a good long time because I know them . . . And things like that go on all day. And that's why it takes more time than you would think for the city because people think that the mayor takes care of all of them. And, of course, I know all these people by their first names and have known them for 60 years, and I can't tell them it's somebody else's department or bury the cat themselves. I have to be real nice about it."

Dead cats aside, Walder is a former UCCA member who became mayor later in 1971 when Pete Thomas, the moderate car dealer, resigned.* The resignation was a delayed result of Cairo's election that April when two ex-White Hats who have already testified—James Dale and Allen Moss—were elected on the same slate with Walder to the City Council. Thomas had run on a bi-racial ticket against a United Front candidate whom he defeated overwhelmingly. But the net result of the election was to put the four-man council under control of former vigilantes.

Thomas said the day after the election: "I still don't know how long I am going to last. So far, they (white militants) have blocked everything I've tried to do. I can only hope they become more moderate now that they are on the hot seat."

It turned out that Thomas was on the hot seat. The new councilmen steadily undermined his authority until he was forced to step down, replaced by Walder whose store became a favorite target of boycott pickets. Testifying, the mayor at first acknowledges a certain unpopularity among blacks. He tells Commissioner Freeman that "I believe that the black residents do not think I'm their mayor."

A few minutes later, Commissioner Mitchell says: "You took an oath when you took the job and you have a responsibility for leadership. How do you see yourself exercising that?"

Mayor Walder replies: "Well, I over-exaggerated in my statement to Mrs. Freeman. There's a lot of colored people who do feel like I'm their mayor. In fact, I feel like the great percentage of them feel that way, especially those I know personally. And over a period of years, I know a lot of them personally."

Since he has extensive knowledge of blacks and whites covering 60 years, Mayor Walder is asked why—with one or two exceptions—blacks have not been appointed to city boards or agencies like the Public Utilities Commission?

"I can't account for anything, of course, that happened before November of 1971, four months ago," he answers. "But I think that what you say is basically true. I have only been mayor for four months."

The mayor recounts the general difficulty in finding qualified men who will give up their time to serve

*Thomas, who served during Cairo's most tumultuous years, would have been an invaluable witness. But those years proved a bruising experience in his personal and business life, and he apparently does not care to re-live them publicly, and did not testify at the hearing.

on unpaid boards. ". . . I would say the colored man has to work a little harder for his money, in that he is generally employed by somebody else and his time is not his own."

COUNSEL POWELL: "Don't you think that in a community such as this which has about 38 percent black population the blacks ought to be more accurately reflected on the public bodies and commissions?"

MAYOR WALDER: "If people could be found that are willing to serve on these committees, yes."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "You do think that? It's your position that blacks are not on these public bodies and commissions because they are not willing to serve. Is that what you're saying?"

MAYOR WALDER: "That's right. Yes. That's right."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "But if people would come—".

MAYOR WALDER: "I didn't go far enough into [describing] my limited colored pool I don't think. We have got when we get right down to it about 15 or 20 colored men—and these committees are mainly men—that can serve on these committees . . . And out of [those 15 or 20] we have to find somebody that is willing to serve on them. And it's difficult to find them. It's a job to find, I say, the Caucasians to serve on the committees. These committees are without pay. They are no fun. They are civic duty. And it's difficult to find anybody to serve on them and I think that's a great reason why there aren't more blacks on the committees."

A listener remembers the testimony of Rev. John Cobb as he told how, for 20 years, he had gone to council meetings, pleading that the black community be allowed to involve itself in city government. ". . . in most cases the City Council would sit quiet and listen and then in many cases sneer or show a lack of interest," was his testimony.

A listener also remembers the local income statistics cited by Staff Director Buggs as he tried to determine what it would take to induce a white dentist to treat a black patient, ". . . at least 41 black families with incomes over $10,000 a year." That kind of income in Cairo would presumably permit the recipient to indulge in "civic duty".

The Commission moves on to consider the plight of the majority of blacks whose sub-standard income consigns them to sub-standard housing. Mayor Walder says he doesn't have any program for low income families at the moment. "We would desperately like to get a program in here that will work but we don't think instant slums are the answer. We don't want to try a program that will not do the job. We have a slum. We don't need a new slum."

Previous testimony has shown that the City Council not only voted not to sell city land to a bi-racial corporation that planned to build low income housing but also rescinded a rent supplement proposal passed before the April election that put Walder, Moss and Dale on the Council.

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Why would you rescind a resolution which was a broad resolution and which could be taken advantage of by anyone? Mr. Ewing's ability or lack of ability to take advantage of the program provided for by the resolution has nothing to do with the need in the county which the resolution helps to meet, does it?"

MAYOR WALDER: "Why not rescind the resolution, Mr. Powell? It was serving no purpose. And it can be put back on the city books by a simple vote in five minutes when it is proven necessary."

The vote, then, was not a calculated rebuff to black assertion that it would play a hand in the city's future but a kind of municipal housecleaning to keep old resolutions from cluttering up the books. Does the mayor, perhaps, have another housing program in mind or for that matter any kind of program to improve conditions in Cairo?

MAYOR WALDER: "No, I don't think we have—"

COMMSSIONER FREEMAN: "You don't have any program?"

MAYOR WALDER: "—a definite program, no, I'm afraid we don't."

COMMISSIONER FREEMAN: "Do you think that Cairo can continue the way it is right now?"

MAYOR WALDER: "Well, yes, I guess we can. We have continued this long . . . . Those who haven't liked it have gone and they are gone. And those who have liked it have stayed. And while we are not

perhaps the most prosperous community in the country, we're not I think the worst community in the country either. And I'm civic-minded. I believe that the time will come when we all get along very well together and I believe . . . I don't believe we are ever going to be Chicago but I believe we'll show growth."

If that is authority's present word on the future of Cairo, is there any "power structure" in the wings that has formulated it? Commissioner Mitchell asks: "Who makes the decisions in Cairo?"

Mayor Walder turns to Jack Bauer, Chairman of the Alexander County Board of Commissioners sitting beside him and says: "If there's any power it would be in the Alexander County courthouse, I'd say, Jack. Not with Jack, I don't think. But with the people who have been up there."

Alexander County is Heard

Mr. Bauer has been "up there" on the Board of Commissioners for seven years. Pursuing the question of power and responsibility in local government, the General Counsel says: "Mr. Bauer, the Commission learned . . . that of the 44 members appointed by the County Board of Commissioners to the County Housing Authority since its inception in 1938 none has been black. How would you account for that?"

MR. BAUER: "Well, I can't answer for something that has happened over a period of years. I am assuming that that's what has happened. And I'm assuming that these members have been appointed by the Chairman of the County Board over those years. And I would have no way of answering it, sir."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "But you have been a member of the Board of Commissioners for the last seven years, have you not?"

MR. BAUER: "Yes sir, that's true."

GENERAL COUNSEL: "And in that period have you formed an impression as to why it is that in all the years, including the seven which you have been on the Commission, there has been no black person appointed to an authority which has jurisdiction over an area which is very important to blacks?"

MR. BAUER: "No, I haven't formed any opinion. I have never consulted about it, sir."

A vacancy currently exists on the Authority and Bauer says that he is considering appointing a black.

GENERAL COUNSEL: "Have you taken any steps to insure that the County Housing Authority does not practice racial discrimination in its employment practices?"

MR. BAUER: "I don't think I have anything to do with that, sir."

But Bauer's board does directly control 44 full-time jobs. Testimony shows that nine are held by blacks including a jailer and cook in the Sheriff's department and four black case workers and receptionists in Welfare.

Since Bauer "can't answer for something that has happened over a period of years," and Mayor Walder "can't account for anything, of course, that happened before November of 1971," power and responsibility on the local level prove difficult to pin down.

The State Comes Forward

What about the higher state level? Gov. Ogilvie's aide, Paul J. Wisner, who directs the Illinois Office of Human Resources, testifies. He had been the Governor's personal representative in Cairo during some of the worst of the troubles. The United Front's Rev. Koen had criticized him then as having "a complete lack of understanding and ability to work with blacks." Wisner's present office has broad but somewhat amorphous duties—liaison for Model Cities programs, community service demonstration programs, and a division of program development "which has a substantive analytical staff capability available to the Governor, other agencies and private groups throughout the state of Illinois." His own analysis of Cairo is curiously devoid of reference to the racial crucible the city has passed through. It is also fogged by what passes for syntax in government.

". . . we realize at the state level that not only Cairo but a lot of cities and a lot of counties in southern Illinois have suffered over the period of time and have become in some ways backwaters in a

large industrial state that is one of the largest . . . in the country. I think there is an attention being given to this by the agencies in terms of developing local competence in placing districts in localities throughout the state so that the problems of dealing with the sophisticated mechanisms of our society, whether economic development in the private sector or the categorical programs with federal funds available in the public sector, can be tapped by these localities. So that while Cairo is a special problem, it's not uncharacteristic of general problems that exist in the State of Illinois, particularly with communities that have been former river-rail transportation centers or coal mining areas in the southern part of the state."

Wisner goes on to say that ". . . notwithstanding all the negative aspects of the problems in Cairo, the community still does conduct its life under normal circumstances a great proportion of the time and has areas of community health and stability."

This description of a community that has logged over 200 nights of shooting in the last three years later leads Commissioner Mitchell to say:

". . . something you said and something I heard from Sister Gladys Marie earlier about the fact that things are often better than they seem at these hearings. And I think that's true, because hearings tend not to concentrate on what is at the foot of the Christmas tree but what the problems are. We wouldn't be here if there weren't any problems, so we address ourselves to them.

"But there is also a danger in saying, as I think I heard you say, that life really continues here under normal circumstances and accepting the normality of what we have heard here—the normal circumstances here is that public housing is segregated.

"The normal circumstance here is that if you're black and you have a toothache you have got a transportation problem as well as a toothache.

"And the normal circumstance here is that there are severe problems of law enforcement, that the city government has no plan to deal with many of the kinds of problems that surround this community.

"So if life continues under normal circumstances, that's not good. That's bad."

"I didn't mean to give that impression," Wisner replies, "Because I'm certainly not that tolerant of a standard or normality that would include these problems. I think what I was saying is that there are these problems that exist but they are not always at the fever pitch."

The Governor's aide describes some things the state has done in Cairo.

"We have a proposal which we think is close to fruition on a dental program which will be funded approximately 50–50 for a total of $70,000 from the state and from the OEO. We are looking into the long range plan for the hospital if we can be of assistance . . . to try and develop a comprehensive multi-component health program."

Whether the tangible, pressing need to keep open St. Mary's Clinic comes under a "comprehensive multi-component health program" is uncertain. Exactly what a "comprehensive multi-component health program" is or whether the state is really going to help create whatever it is does not get explained during Wisner's testimony. He does concede that the state-assisted ($140,000 in various funds) United Cairo Community Non-Profit Housing Development Corp. "has had more problems than such an organization normally has in a community [but] they seem to have lived with those problems fairly well."

"Fairly well" is one of those semantic approximations that defy contradiction. The record shows that in July 1969, Governor Ogilvie announced a $5 million low income housing program for Cairo with an initial grant of $290,000 that would eventually produce 250 apartments. Nearly three years later, the state had contributed $140,000, $80,000 of that in a revolving loan fund that eventually would be returned to the state. Exactly one single unit house, priced at $14,900, had been produced with 13 more in the same price range approved for financing by the Farmers Home Administration.

"The first year of a housing development corporation," Wisner says, "being not for profit, community-based type of work, is usually written off as a period of adjustment, settling down, learning to some degree until we develop the local competence. They are proceeding on a single-unit development at this point. They still have in mind multi-unit develop-

ment . . . I think with practical and moderate estimate and a few breaks and some cooperation that they feel they could achieve 50 to 75 units in a year or so in Cairo if they are able to get rolling."

The Commission has already heard that the state paid for the IACP survey of the Cairo Police Department and that the Illinois Law Enforcement Commission offered a $75,000 grant for a police community relations program. Through no fault of the state, Cairo authorities used only $6,000 of that amount, some of this allegedly spent on weapons that remain unaccounted for. Wisner adds that from 1969 through 1971, state police contributed approximately 170,000 man hours to law enforcement problems in Cairo. Whether or not this total includes time spent in Pyramid Court raids for which state police officials face civil trial for alleged brutality is not apparent from the testimony.

Wisner calls attention to the legal services program.

"I think what has happened through governmental assistance is that there has been an effective and balanced advocacy system established in Alexander County and that you have better law being practiced possibly than existed before . . . and I think the impact of the presence of the state police has been felt. I think that it has moderated the conflict . . . let's say the most extreme expressions of the conflict in terms of violence . . . and it has had an impact on public safety in the community."

COUNSEL POWELL: "Mr. Wisner, in your efforts to find solutions to Cairo's problems, have you had the necessary cooperation and assistance from local officials?"

MR. WISNER: "Well, there have been suggestions made that haven't always been respected. I think maybe the question might be broadened as to whether we have had the necessary cooperation from the community in general . . . The community is locked in an intense stalemate that not only is a product of maybe more historical forces of economic decline and racial polarization but a very personal feud between people who have lived in this community for the great part of their life and have very different perceptions of how it ought to proceed, know each other very well and know how to offend each other very well. So I think things don't often get beyond the level of, on the one hand, the hurt and distrust of the black community, and on the other hand, the pride and fear of the white community. And they are at each other pretty good and know how to get at each other pretty good."

Again a white witness—this time the personal representative of the Governor of Illinois—has posed an equation that most blacks find impossible to comprehend. To speak of racial polarization without examining its causes and to stress the element of personal feud avoids use of the word "racism." Would polarization and these particular feuds Wisner alludes to exist in Cairo without racism? Isn't racism the factor that makes the state spend public money to bus children to an all-white private school and to administer segregated public housing, that forces blacks to cross the two broadest rivers in America to get their aching teeth fixed?

Anything less than a frank acknowledgement that racism—and not the United Front or personal feuds —created polarization and created it in Cairo 100 years ago would seem to confuse rather than clarify the issues before the hearing. Wisner's equation suggests—at a time when former White Hats dominate the City Council because the city's white majority likes it that way—that problems might still be solved through the horse-trading techniques of a labor-management negotiation with some new negotiators brought in from both sides. Wisner, in his testimony, refers to the Governor being limited by local government jurisdiction, speaks of areas where the Governor "cannot intervene, does not have discretion, does not have power to direct local officials." But he does not refer to the quantities of law—from the 14th Amendment equal protection clause through state and Federal anti-job bias statutes down to the Illinois' own public housing no-segregation requirements—that are being broken all over Cairo while officials including himself display a high degree of tolerance for illegal behavior.*

What would happen, a listener wonders as Wisner testifies, if through some demographic fluke a mostly black city had developed in Southern Illinois and it

was treating white citizens the way blacks are being treated in Cairo? Would Wisner talk of personal feuds and polarization as a barrier to state action—assuming that the situation had not long before advanced beyond the talking stage?

How the "Feds" See it

He tells the hearing that Federal cooperation in Cairo has been "good." Individual Federal officials have already given their versions of reality in education, housing, law enforcement, etc. The Federal overview comes from Harvey Lorberbaum, chief of the OEO Special Projects Office in the region. He once headed the Federal "task force" for Cairo and in one sense his testimony must be reassuring to those who fear that an all-mighty Washington apparatus moves at will across the land, unsurping local powers and imposing its own. Lorberbaum says that at the end of 1969, a year of unremitting violence, Mayor Thomas came to Chicago to meet with him and other Federal men.

"At that meeting," Lorberbaum testifies, "he told about the problems in Cairo, indicated that Federal programs were badly needed in Cairo. In about August of 1969, [having become] quite aware of a depressed economy, racial conflict, economic boycott, all types of problems, a number of the representatives of Federal agencies started to meet informally to try to determine what would be the best method of approaching the kinds of information requests that were coming in."

Lorberbaum says that Thomas stressed that "the primary responsibility for initiating and designing specific programs should rest with local groups composed of representatives from all segments of our citizentry." Accordingly, when the Federal Regional Council (a bureaucratic catch-all supposed to expedite Washington aid to deserving communities) organized a task force to assist Cairo in March, 1970, the Council sent word to both the United Front *and* the Chamber of Commerce, probably the first and only time in history that the two organizations were on the same mailing list. The word was that help was available "if all major interest groups in Cairo can agree on the creation and composition" of their own correspondent task force.

That, of course, was like trying to get cats and mice to agree on kitchen privileges. For almost the next two years, Lorberbaum says, the Federal force met with "pretty much a non-response" as it waited for Cairo to produce an interracial body it could work with. Toward the end of 1971, the task force tried to throw in the sponge.

". . . it had met with frustration," he says, "since it felt that it had utilized all of the things that were at their disposal and still was unable to get the kind of positive response that it felt was necessary and should have been forthcoming."

It is a surprising, even shocking confession of impotence on the part of a government that is able to organize and fund land reform programs in Southeast Asia, self-help cooperatives in Latin America and explorations on the moon. Lorberbaum says that the task force has continued in a reduced effort and he enumerates some accomplishments. OEO funded St. Mary's Clinic for one beneficial year, there was an emergency food program, Head Start was refunded "as well as funding for the development of three or four play lots in areas where there were no facilities for the children."

COUNSEL POWELL: ". . . Are you aware of any Federal programs which any Federal agency could have instituted in Cairo under its own authority and which such agencies have failed to utilize?"

MR. LORBERBAUM: "No, not under its own authority without any type of local participation. I do not have knowledge of any programs like that, sir."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "What you're really saying is that given a community in which there is a

*In an interview after the hearing, Wisner says of the State's position on Cairo's all-black, all-white public housing: "I think there should be equal opportunity to rent those units but there's been no action on the state level . . . We have to deal within the context and decide whether it will have a positive effect to force integrated housing given the tenuous relations of blacks and whites. So that has not been our principal focus." Wisner's assistant, Julius Hovany, defends the state role by saying, "The middle gets it from both sides," and responds to black militant criticism of the state efforts by saying, "If you can't tell an extreme story, you can't raise funds around the country."

black minority as large as 30 percent or 40 percent or something like that, if the majority group does not want conditions in that city to change by the use of Federal resources, they can decide? Is that right?"

MR. LORBERBAUM: "In many cases yes. There are some limited examples of programs that were funded without the enthusiasm of the majority of the community."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "The word 'enthusiasm' doesn't seem to belong anywhere in this discussion. Let me ask you something then. Here is the United States Commission on Civil Rights . . . which is supposed to come here and look around and go back and sit down and make some recommendations to the Congress and the President of the United States and possibly the officials of the State of Illinois about the alleviation of clearly evident problems or those that appear to be clearly evident in this area . . . Now you say, in 1972, 'Well, for a couple of years we had a . . . task force on this thing. We couldn't get anywhere and we just gave up and filed the papers.' Now, what's the Civil Rights Commission—what is your recommendation to me? What do you think I ought to do? How do you think I ought to talk to the Congress and the President?"

MR. LORBERBAUM: "[the task force] did help to implement programs here in the community. The successes were minimal since there are very limited programs that can be put into a community without community acceptance."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "So you're not making any recommendations to me then? You have learned as a result of the work of your task force that there is no recommendation that will work?"

MR. LORBERBAUM: "Oh, no, I think there are many, sir. I think there are many, sir."

COMMISSIONER MITCHELL: "Have you ever made those in the form of a recommendation in writing?"

MR. LOBERBAUM: "In writing? No, sir. I have discussed them with local officials. I have discussed them with our community action agency."

A Letter to the Commission

On Saturday, March 25th, Commissioner Freeman introduces into the record a letter that the Commission has received from a white Cairo resident. All formal testimony has been received; there is a moment available to consider a plaintive communication from someone who individually has reversed Cairo's out-migration, choosing recently to make her home there. Staff Director Buggs reads these excerpts:

". . . I was walking near some projects and saw two white girls about eleven years old who were unwrapping candy bars and throwing the paper on the ground. I asked them why they were making their town ugly, and one replied, 'Because I don't like this town.'

" 'Why not?'

" 'Ain't nothing in it.'

"This is the kind of child I worry about because she doesn't have the association with Camelot children and she doesn't have association with black children either. White people are afraid to work with blacks for fear of retaliation from other whites. I think this is the major source of difficulty in race relations. How do I propose to overcome this difficulty? I think the best way to overcome the fear of associating with people is for authority figures to set the example. If the authority figures in the country and in the neighborhoods would set the example of associating with people of different ethnic groups, the other people in the country would have no difficulty in following.

"If the government would talk the white establishment in this town into being helpful, I really think I could talk the rest of the people into cooperating . . . I think that if you can get the Establishment to work for you and with you, the others will follow. And especially if the newspaper will cooperate and give Mrs. No-Name some publicity because she's working on the committee with Mrs. Prominent Black and Mrs. Well-Known-White."

Those are formidable "ifs" in the letter, springing more from hope than from reality.

A Summing Up

Commissioner Freeman, in summing up the hearing, casts a realistic eye on the life of Cairo that has been crowded into three days of testimony.

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"We have seen men and women, black and white, deeply concerned with the needs of this community, facing the frustration of dealing with seemingly immobile bureaucracies on the one hand and racial prejudice and poverty, as divisive factors, on the other.

"This Commission held its first hearing in Montgomery, Alabama in 1958. Since that time the Nation has made important advances in guaranteeing equal rights for all citizens. Unfortunately, it would appear that this progress has barely begun in Cairo. The contrast between progress and reaction is stark.

. . .

"Many of the people that remain are enmeshed in a familiar pattern of need: need for adequate employment, need for decent nonsegregated housing, need for effective education, and above all, need for hope in a climate of pervasive despair.

. . .

". . . state and Federal agencies, although interested and in some cases willing to provide aid, have thus far not demonstrated the capacity for implementing imaginative programs which would provide a decent educational opportunity for the children of Cairo.

"In the field of law enforcement, the Commission heard sharply contrasting testimony, underscoring the degree to which there has been a lack of communication and understanding in this city. Cairo has too long been a community where guns and violence are substituted for reason and cooperation. The police department seems to have become an instrument of control in the hands of one segment of the community, rather than an agency responsible for the maintenance of peace.

. . .

"Most troubling to this subcommittee is the information we have obtained concerning public housing. Such housing comprises nearly 15 percent of the total housing stock in Cairo, and it is almost totally segregated. This is known to the responsible Federal officials to be a clear violation of their guidelines."

Commissioner Freeman goes down the list: "shortage of health care," blacks "confined to the lowest job levels," "municipal commissions and public bodies [that] remain all white."

Finally, she promises that the "information obtained here will be the basis for our communications to concerned Federal and state agencies. We will ask these agencies to take remedial actions commensurate with their full authority, and to continue to offer resources to Cairo which in the past have been refused by local officials."

The gavel falls; the hearing ends.

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PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE
II. . . . The Life of a City, A Nation Continues

"..... Some people believe, for various reasons, that the quiet days are over and continuing trouble can be expected for weeks and months to come."
St. Louis Monitor, August 3, 1972.

"Several white men attacked two buses carrying black and Puerto Rican children to a Queens junior high school yesterday morning, smashing windows with pipes and dumping oil on the students."
New York Times, October 26, 1972.

The hearing is over but Cairo goes on. A few months later, on a day when the city's streets drowse in the heat of mid-summer, an observer of the hearing visits the city. Only an occasional car passes along the main thoroughfare of Washington Street or, to the west toward the Mississippi, down Commercial Street where the black boycott is entering its fourth year. Cairo may be at the apex of the inland waterway system of the United States, with four major railroads and three major transcontinental highways meeting there but one would never know it from the pervading emptiness. And if it is hard to believe that such a sparsely-peopled town is bounded by the country's two greatest rivers with roads and rails reaching out from it to the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, it is harder still to visualize past days and nights of violence—the crackle of sniper fire, buildings aflame, National Guardsmen in battle gear patrolling now peaceful sidewalks.

But the present surface quiet may be misleading. Little or nothing has been resolved since the Commission left Cairo: public housing remains segregated, no blacks have been added to the Police and Fire Departments, public school teachers are being fired in wholesale lots but Camelot continues to enjoy tax-exempt status while the IRS chooses to

investigate the United Front.* Already ominous echoes of the past are heard. Early in August, the marquee of the Gem movie theater read: "Theatre Temporarily Closed." There had been an interracial fistfight inside one night, brief but fierce, and when it was over blacks were arrested but the white youths were permitted to pick up their popcorn and go home.

There had also been a resumption of nighttime shooting, The *St. Louis Monitor* under the headline, SHOOTING STARTS AGAIN IN CAIRO, reported on August 3rd:

> ". . . there were three nights last week that were filled with gunfire which has been described as 'moderate' by Cairo standards. The three consecutive nights of shooting was the longest since March 21 of this year which immediately preceded the public hearing by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. There have been no reports of personal injury or damage to property . . . Many rumors are circulating in both the black and white communities and some people believe, for various reasons, that the quiet days are over and continuing trouble can be expected in the weeks and months to come."

A block or so from the police station, a traffic island where Washington St. splits into Sycamore provides a shady and historical vantage for a follower of the hearings to catch up on newspaper reports of contemporary developments. The island, shielded from the southern Illinois sun by sycamore trees, holds Cairo's proudest artistic possession, a turn-of-the-century sculpture called "The Hewer" by George Gray Barnard. The Hewer has found eternal employment chopping into a marble log with his marble axe. But, according to a *Monitor* news story in hand from August 31st, too many flesh-and-blood Cairo-ites are not working on anything. The paper says that the Illinois State Employment Service has reported general unemployment in Alexander and Pulaski Counties at 10 percent, up a point from the hearings and nearly double the national rate. The *Monitor* claims that real unemployment stands at 20 percent for whites, 40 percent for blacks, and it claims that 40 percent of all jobs in Cairo are held by non-resident whites from Kentucky and Missouri.*

An adjoining story is headlined: WHITES GET 96% OF CITY HALL MONEY. At first glance, it seems that journalistic exaggeration must be at work. But the figures in the story are the city's own, taken from payroll records and an annual report of expenditures. The story says that the City Council, between May 1st, 1971 and April 30, 1972, "spent $1.4 million on city employees and for purchase of goods and the delivery of services. Blacks received only $60,000 of that amount." A research group from Southern Illinois University, working with Cairo blacks, reported that only 12 of 130 city employees were black. Ten of these were street or garbage workers. An analysis of the expenditures report showed that while almost $1 million was spent for goods and services, black suppliers received *only $1020.*

Putting aside the newspaper and looking out from the locus of "The Hewer," the visiting eye can sweep over much of Cairo's embattled history like a military historian's inspecting an ancient field of combat. Except that this battle is not yet committed to history. Just South is the brick jail and police station

*By 1973 when this publication went to press, blacks reported a decrease in police harassment and the hiring of two probationary black patrolmen. Although the Environmental Protection Agency had approved funding a new fire house, there still were no black firemen in Cairo.

*Non-resident job figures are difficult to verify. At the hearing, T. J. Connaughton, vice president of Burkart's, said that more than 75 percent of the workers in Cairo's largest industry came from outside the city—548 of 700. One hundred fifty-four of these were black, he said. Groups like United Front say the bulk of these blacks are from Alexander County but that the vast majority of non-resident whites are from out of State, depriving local people of jobs. The Spring floods of 1973 supplied some fresh evidence on this point. Although Cairo levees saved the city, severe floods across the Mississippi and Kentucky crossed Highway 51 leading from the bridge into Cairo. This meant that Kentucky residents from Paducah and elsewhere would have to drive an additional 96 miles to get to their jobs in Cairo. The *Cairo Evening News* reported that absenteeism at the city's main plants—including Burkart's—ran 50 percent.

where Pvt. Robert L. Hunt died on July 15, 1967, and in death brought life to Cairo's Movement.

A rifle shot away from the jail, at 14th and Sycamore, are the bullet-pocked church, rectory and school of the black Roman Catholic St. Columbia's Church. It was here that Father Montroy became a cause celebre, saint or sinner depending on one's racial philosophy. The spare and homely frame buildings, originally built by a Catholic hierarchy in Cairo dedicated to keeping black Catholics out of the white Catholic church and school, came under heavy fire from October 21 through 24 in 1970. Blacks charge that the riflemen shot from the roof of the Police Station, fusillade after fusillade while white and black civil rights workers, men and women, cowered inside. In midsummer 1972, the white Catholics of St. Patrick's Church of Cairo, in concert with their Bishop Albert Zuroweste, are trying to evict the NAACP and the United Front from their offices in St. Columba's that activist priests had formally signed over to them. This eviction attempt is based on the claim by Bishop Zuroweste and his Cairo followers that St. Patrick's church and school today can accommodate both black and white. But there are Catholics who question the sincerity of the bishop's position. Sister Margaret Ellen Traxler, member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and Chairman of the National Coalition of American Nuns, expresses a different view of the St. Colombia's eviction attempt and has made this appeal to her sister nuns:

"I call upon you to forgo further complicity with St. Patrick's Church and School. It is easy to argue that in teaching at St. Patrick's where there are some black children, we at least do something constructive in a tense and polarized community. It is a false argument because we must look to the over-all thrust of racism, to the over-all evil act of sharing even by our presence in a racist court eviction in which oppressor moves against the oppressed. We can never do a little good in what is an overwhelming evil act."

The St. Patrick's-St. Columba's dispute will be decided in civil, not ecclesiastic, courts.* And a few blocks down from the church in the storefront office of the Lawyer's Committee, other racial cases make their slow way to judgment. Among them is a suit against former White Hat leader Peyton Berbling, Alexander County state's attorney, charging him and other high law enforcement officials with racial discrimination against blacks in the administration of criminal justice. In late summer, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Berbling and the others must stand trial. Also pending is a Lawyer's Committee suit against Mayor Walder, County Commission Chairman Bauer, and institutions from the Alexander County Welfare Services Committee down to the Cairo Board of Library Directors.

The Lawyers' Committee office, with its bullet-punctured Xerox and a framed motto from Abraham Lincoln that says "To sin by silence makes cowards of men," is the first stop on a stroll around the town to gather post-hearing impressions. Lawyer Robert Landsden, Cairo's foremost white advocate of the need for racial equity and scion of one of the city's first families, works in a small office cluttered with briefs and the paperwork from scores of civil rights cases. His father and grandfather were Cairo lawyers. He has seen justice and injustice closeup for 40 years before the bar. Landsden was quoted early in these pages when he said this about the town where he has lived his lifetime:

"There are a lot of white people who would sooner see Cairo float down the Mississippi than give a black man a break."

Nothing has happened to alter that judgment and Landsden, ostracized by many of the people he grew up with, is not optimistic as he presses in court for racial gains he does not feel can be achieved through negotiation.

"I myself wouldn't fool with the Chamber of Commerce or City Council," he says. "They wouldn't do anything to benefit black people. The most disappointing thing to me, though, is the failure of the Federal judges to try these civil rights cases. The delay is *not* normal. We are asking for injunctive relief, where an injunction against the exclusions

*Before the case was decided, the National Black Catholic Association and the Catholic Interracial Justice Committee bought St. Columbia's from the Bishop and deeded it to the United Front.

of blacks from governing bodies might solve the problem. And the lame excuse is that the judges have too many criminal cases to try. The excuse does not hold water."

Is the appraisal too pessimistic? Has no progress been made since the hearings? No progress—no, State and Federal pressure have resulted in one black appointment each to the Housing and Welfare authorities. The third black in Cairo's history has been named to the Board of Education; Bobby Whitaker is now the only black on the seven-member board. There is continuing talk of a state-assisted dental clinic opening. But for the present, a black dentist named Scott from Chicago flies down in his own plane each Sunday night to see black patients on Monday and Tuesday. On Wednesday, a white dentist—not one of the two who testified—treats blacks. Thursday on, a toothache means a trip over the Ohio or Mississippi.

Van Ewing's United Cairo Community Non-Profit Housing Development Corp.—its name mercifully shortened to Egyptian Housing Development Corp.—is still stymied by the city's refusal to sell land from making any start on low-income housing.

The beginning production of middle income housing, by and for blacks, is a source of black pride in accomplishment.* But it is small comfort to those still living in shacks and likely to remain there into any foreseeable future. With the exception of one grocery, Cairo's retail stores continue to defy the boycott by employing only whites.

The small progress in Cairo has been brought at a great price. Years of agitation, violence and death, thousands of hours in courts or on picket lines, unnumbered petitions to authorities for redress, two hearings under the aegis of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the spectre of more struggle ahead —all this to obtain three civic appointments, one new house, a few jobs in a grocery and the promise of a dentist.

*By early 1973, 35 middle income (about $15,000) homes had been completed and 21 were under construction. The Illinois Housing Authority provided the corporation with staff and planning funds while the Farmers Home Administration supplied the mortgages. Payments ran around $85 a month which some Cairo welfare residents had been paying to live in hovles. Three welfare families are presently "homeowners." Eight others who had been on welfare got jobs through the corporation (the general contractors and sub-contractors all are black), got off welfare and bought homes they had helped to build. The city still refuses to sell land on which multi-family buildings could be constructed to provide apartments for low-income citizens.

An Editor Speaks

But a few steps from the Lawyers' Committee at the *Cairo Evening News,* editor David Cain is interviewed and has a different appraisal. Tall and grave, Cain is bullish on Cairo.

"I see Southern Illinois and Cairo as one of the richest areas in the United States as far as the quality of life that can be obtained here," he says. "I can travel to any recreation area in five counties. There's Shawnee National Forest, there are magnificent homes. Shawnee Junior College has a training program we participate in that serves five counties. Things exist but unless you merchandise them right nothing happens. We have an aggressive Chamber of Commerce that was doing real well until the whole thing flared up again. Why did the Civil Rights Commission hold hearings to open a bunch of old wounds that had been partially healed. This is what our tax money is going to and they are coming back to crucify us."

Asked, "Are there any legitimate grievances here in Cairo?" Cain replies:

"Yes, on both sides. But people interested in minority groups completely ignore the majority of the population who pay taxes, send their kids to school, and behave as good citizens."

"What do you think about the fact there are virtually no blacks working in retail stores?"

Cain thinks for a full minute and says:

"I don't think very much about it. Most stores are mom-and-pop places. And good people are hard to find. When these people feel they have a need, they will do it willingly. But when they feel forced, they'll balk at it."

Cain's newspaper, of course, is the only one in Cairo, the only source of information about what is going on in government, education, and business. He

employs some black clerical help but no black reporters. As a journalist, he feels that the nation's press has misrepresented Cairo while listening to the "media freaks" of the United Front.

"I found a really lot of bad holes in their reporting," he says. "The *N.Y. Times* was the worst of all. It was the paper tube phenomena. Looking through it, everything looked a little bigger than it was but there was no real magnification. And the Civil Rights Commission was guilty of the same thing. For example, they were not willing to listen to the Sisters of St. Mary's, to hear their plans or the good things they had to say about Cairo."

A check of the transcript tests editor Cain's final reportorial conclusion. On page 655 there is the following colloquy:

COUNSEL POWELL: "Is there anything else of particular significance that you would like to comment on so the Commissioners might—"

SISTER GLADYS MARIE: "Yes, I would. I would like to comment on the black white ratio also, and also on our outreach program."

COUNSEL POWELL: "Please. Take your time."

On page 656, Powell says: "You have mentioned your outreach program. Would you care to describe that for the Commissioner and how the mobile unit is used in that?" On page 663, Commissioner Mitchell asks Sister Joan Marie: "Is there a health plan . . . for the city?" And on page 669, Commissioner Freeman says: "The Sisters of Holy Cross should certainly be commended for the kind of program that you have underway. We wish you success. We wish we could say that we could offer you more than our good wishes. But it's refreshing to receive this kind of testimony." Finally, on the mundane level of the length of testimony, the sisters receive 23 pages in the transcript. This compares with 17 for Rev. Koen of the United Front and 14 for Jake Bleveans of the Lawyers' Committee, while Mayor Walder and County Commissioner Bauer received 33 pages and Police Chief Bowers and Cairo Police Commissioner Dale logged 34 pages.

Despite the record, bad feeling against the Commission persists as another short walk across town to the office of attorney John Holland reveals. Holland —about the same age as Lawyer Landsden—is his opposite in almost every way. The two men have had parallel careers, have studied the same body of evidence available in the life of Cairo and have managed to arrive at diametrically opposed conclusions. Holland defends most of the persons that Landsden's civil rights cases bring into court. When a visitor enters Holland's well-appointed offices paneled in walnut, State Police Supervisor William Reineking —defendant in suits brought by Pyramid Court residents for allegedly illegal police raids—is waiting to see the attorney.

Holland sits inside with Tom Madra, White Hat leader and Camelot organizer, and he is at the desk-pounding stage of anger with the United Front, the Civil Rights Commission and the Lawyers' Committee even before the interview begins.

"I'll tell you about the United Front," he says, his stout face flushing as a fist comes down on the desk. "They're a damn bunch of criminals that destroyed a million dollars worth of property. Nobody's going to deal with them. Just not going to do it. They were going to murder 15 people, do you know that? They collected money from all over the country and none of it ever went for the use of the poor black man. Now we're all for helping the poor man. But by God, you don't do that through the Lawyers' Committee or the Civil Rights Commission."

Holland cools down after his initial explosion and says that while there is no proof about the United Front "murder list" charge, the FBI has statements from a black girl charging that the Front attacked her home because she tried to work in a downtown store that was being boycotted.

"Listen," Holland says, "I told Preston Ewing a dozen times I'm looking for a good colored leader who can control his people. Everybody looks for a good black man nowadays. You find one and you've got liquid gold."

"They put one on the Fire Department," Madra says, "Even though he couldn't pass the test. He quit. Said he didn't like to sit around."

Holland relaxes in a smile and adds, "He must

have been a pretty good kind of Negro," he says, "If he didn't like to sit around."

Madra, who holds a master's degree, is a strongly-built man taut with nervous energy. He sits on the edge of his chair, feet drumming and says: "There's no good black leadership in this community. There *are* some good Negro undertakers and doctors. But that's all."

Do blacks have any legitimate complaints? Housing, for example?

"There's no doubt," Madra replies, "That blacks from other states did gravitate here into Illinois because of the welfare programs and did inherit bad housing. They came here for the largesse. They were unemployed and unemployable. They live by preference in a shanty."

Attorney Holland explains that there are no blacks in government because "there are very few to choose from. There's nothing better than having a good black man on your city council. But the black militants drive them out. We're thinking now of putting two on the council."

His solution to the black problem of unemployed youth, quoted earlier, may bear repeating. "Build a lot of athletic facilities," Holland says. "Stick up 15 basketball posts and bring in first class men to teach 'em. Course, it remains to be seen whether they'd put in a bunch of wild men."

The last interview a visitor to Cairo has is with two men who might fall inside Holland's "wild" category—Rev. Koen and Preston Ewing. Koen still has not recovered from his long fast; his body is wispy and his eyes seem to stare at you from some far place he has been. Ewing is tall and energetic, a self-confident man in his early 30's who has somehow managed to grow up in Cairo without being demoralized by a system that has either crippled many blacks and whites or sent them fleeing. The men are in Ewing's home, a plain but ample wooden house in a neighborhood of similar houses where some whites still live.

"I was born on this block," Ewing says. "We still talk with the whites but not the way it used to be. One white lady down the street on the Library Board just was served with one of our subpoenas."

Ewing is putting up a new ceiling in his living room, preparing the place for educational teams from Southern Illinois University that will be coming in to tutor high school students and provide courses like photography that are not available in the public schools.

"We've decided to bring in educational resources because that's the only way we're going to get them," he explains. "In a sense, the Front and the NAACP is assuming responsibility for the welfare of the black community. With the Establishment here, even the things you gain you have to fight to consolidate them and you can't move on to new things. So we've had to shift gears in our approach. There are times you need to use the streets and numbers of people to gain support and raise issues. Now is the time for programs. It doesn't get the headlines but it's a critical time."

Rev. Koen agrees.

"There is now a systematic plot underway to destroy the Front," he says. "That's bluntly stating it. It's not on the old level of vigilante attack and harassment, police raids and so forth. It's like the Internal Revenue investigating the Front. It's people tied into the local Catholic Church structure trying to force us out of St. Columba's. It's former vigilantes who have manipulated themselves skillfully into positions of authority within the city government.

"This election, they are trying to take over the county government which was bad enough before.* These people no longer have to wear White Hats. They can force the sheriff to deputize them and go forth under the cloak of law. And if it can happen here, I think it can happen in other parts of America. The issue is, how will the state and Federal governments deal with it?"

How will the state and Federal governments deal with it? That question is branded on the consciousness of anyone who witnessed the Commission hearing and who has seen Cairo at first-hand. At the end of a summer's day, washing down the many conver-

*Cairo city councilman Moss, former White Hat, was defeated in November for election to the Alexander County Board of Commissioners.

sations with a cold beer in a Cairo bar, the question requires a reassuring answer. But there is none.

During the hearings, one listened in vain when state and Federal officials testified, to hear a tone of outrage in their voices at conditions in Cairo. Some sign that they were offended, first as human beings and then as Americans, that color could tear a town and the people in it apart. But the capacity for outrage over racism seemed to have deserted them, if they ever possessed it. Instead, most offered defenses of their own little bureaucratic fiefs or cumbersome evasions of responsibility. They were being asked about lives—the way children grow and learn, how men and women teach, keep a comfortable home, or seek dignity and reward in labor. But so many of their answers held no essence of these human considerations, were as dry and detached as if they were testifying about soil conditions on the moon.

Their attitudes, perhaps, are understandable at a time when national leaders are not above using code words that are really racist shibboleths, as they practice their politics. The officials take their cue from those on top and when "leaders" choose to lead backwards, subordinates follow. And if a defense can be made for the apathetic state and Federal witnesses, one should also be made for Cairo. Sipping the beer, looking at one of the ubiquitous signs Scotch-taped to the bar mirror: "Cairo—Love It or Leave It," and listening to white voices that are certain in a racially obsessed atmosphere to say Nigger this or that before the beer is finished, it is easy to despise Cairo.

A stupid and sullen place with an Amos and Andy view of blacks and predisposition to meanness. But that is too easy and it is unfair. Cairo has its share of racist grotesques but it also has as much human capacity for decency as any city. The sign behind the bar could just as easily read: "Integrated Cairo—Love It or Leave It." But Cairo whites have been conditioned to act the way they do by their total American experience. They have been getting a message from Washington and Springfield for the last 100, the last 50, the last four years. With varying degrees of explicitness, that message has been: Racial equality laws are an inevitable legal outgrowth of the Constitution but enforcement will be satisfied with apparent, not essential, change. If—when the 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed—a deep and uncompromising national commitment had been made to racial equality in America, if that commitment had been pursued with the same passionate energy and spirit that was lavished on a diversion like the space program, Cairo today might not be a banquet hall of interracial love feasts. But it *could not* be a pit of racial combat.

Months after a summer sojourner in Cairo goes back East, the *New York Times* one Fall day carries three stories in a single edition that are concerned with racial conditions in New York City. One story tells about white parents sitting-in at a public school to keep out black children. This is not a Wallace standing in an Alabama doorway but people with names like Mariano, Goldberg, Reilly and Kowalsky barring the offspring of Americans whose forbears in most cases caught an earlier boat to these shores than did the ancestors of those turning black children away. Another story describes the burning of an interracial church in the city and a sign painted on the sidewalk outside: "Nigger Get Out, This Is a Warning." The third reports the city's retreat from construction of a bitterly-opposed low income housing project that would have brought poor blacks into a white middle-income neighborhood.

If the founders of Camelot, the city council that refused to sell land for a bi-racial housing development, and the church fathers pressing eviction at St. Columba's read those stories, how can any findings of a Civil Rights Commission convince them that Cairo bears some unique guilt that should be atoned for by good racial works?

"I think," the Rev. John Cobb testified, "That 'South' has moved all over the country."

That may be a libel on the South. Racism isn't regional today and it never has been. That is an American truth as evident on a Cairo levee as it is on Broadway. Whether this truth turns the American Dream into the American Tragedy depends on the national conscience and will. No commission can judge that. But ultimately, that will determine the future of Cairo, the fate of us all.